

New Caledonia: Written images and metaphors of France and Europe
in the context of the 2018 New Caledonian independence referendum

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Acronyms, Abbreviations and Translations

<i>Agence France-Presse</i>	AFP
<i>Anti-indépendantistes</i>	Anti-independentists
CE	<i>Calédonie Ensemble</i>
<i>l'État français</i> or <i>l'État</i>	The French State
EU	European Union
FLNKS	<i>Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste</i>
<i>Indépendantistes</i>	Independentists
<i>La1ère</i>	<i>Outre-mer La1ère</i>
LRC	<i>Les Républicains Calédoniens</i>
LNC	<i>Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes</i>
MPC	<i>Mouvement Populaire Calédonien</i>
Palika	<i>Parti de Libération Kanak</i>
PT	<i>Parti Travailleiste</i>
UC	<i>Union Calédonienne</i>
UNI	<i>Union National Pour L'Indépendance</i>
US	United States of America
USTKE	<i>Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et des Exploités</i>

Abstract

On the 4th November 2018, New Caledonia voters went to the polling booths to determine whether New Caledonia would seek independence from the French Republic. This study builds on Entman's cascading activation framing theory to analyse the media framing processes in New Caledonia in the build-up to the referendum. This research adds to the scholarship of media framing by analysing an understudied Pacific case study and by specifically analysing the emotive and thematic framing of key subjects, France and Europe/the European Union, in the context of the referendum. As France and Europe/the European Union were generally framed on the *neutral-to-positive* side of the emotive spectrum, there were few direct emotive framing contests. Consequently, this thesis placed greater focus on analysing 'importance' framing contests: which frames are presented as being more important for discussion. Ultimately, this study advances the idea that the president's capacity to influence framing is limited if the president is not physically present in the territory or not able to meaningfully contribute to discussion. This thesis also argued that the most salient articles should receive special attention, as the emotive and thematic framing within these articles may differ from trends observed among all the articles. This thesis proposed a novel analytical mechanism for determining salience: examining the correlation between visibility and emotive charge of the subject under analysis.

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1. Introduction

On November 4th 2018, New Caledonia voters went to the polling booths to determine whether New Caledonia would seek independence from the French Republic. This referendum was 30 years in the making, the legacy of the Matignon-Oudinot and Nouméa Accords. Consequently, it was widely covered by both local journalists and those from abroad. As for any major political event, journalists played an important role in determining the presentation of newsworthy issues to society: what images did they invoke with their words? What new or pre-existing narratives did they emphasise? Of course, journalists do not have unlimited power. The words and actions of politicians influence how journalists present events and issues. The public appetite for certain stories may also influence how journalists choose to portray the news.

The presentation of news in a certain way, whether deliberate or not, is known as framing.

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman 1993, p.52, italics in original).

This is the working definition of framing used for this research.

1.1. Research questions

Ultimately, this research aimed to examine framing of France and Europe/the European Union (EU) in the context of the New Caledonian independence referendum. This research was guided by two overarching research questions and six operational sub-research questions.

RQ1: How did media frames of France and Europe/EU contribute to discussion on the future of New Caledonia in the context of the referendum?

RQ2: How does the media interact with other stakeholders, such as politicians and the public, to create frames of France and Europe/EU in the context of the referendum?

S-RQ1: What is the visibility of France in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?

S-RQ2: What is the visibility of Europe/EU in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?

S-RQ3: How is France portrayed emotively in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?

S-RQ4: How is Europe/EU portrayed emotively in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?

S-RQ5: In what ways is France discussed in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?

S-RQ6: *In what ways is Europe/EU discussed in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?*

1.2 Empirical data

In order to answer these questions, this thesis engaged with two sets of empirical data. The first one consists of written news media articles published from 19th March 2018 to 3rd November 2018 (inclusive) by the two leading media sources in New Caledonia: *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* (LNC) and *Outre-mer La1ère* (*La1ère*). LNC is the sole daily newspaper in New Caledonia and *La1ère* is the leading local television channel which also publishes news articles online. On 19th March 2018, the date of the referendum was announced as the 4th November 2018. As such, the 310 French-language articles (LNC = 238, *La1ère* = 72) comprising the primary data sample capture the entire referendum campaign. Articles were included in the sample if they discussed the referendum and France and/or Europe/EU. The second data set consists of three semi-structured interviews conducted with New Caledonian journalists. LNC and *La1ère* are both represented in these interviews, and the third interview was conducted with a journalist from *La Voix de Kanaky*, a pro-independence journal.

1.3 Limitations

This research does not include radio and television bulletins and news stories in the analysis, although they are prominent in the New Caledonian media landscape (Christnacht 2004, p.132). This limitation is mitigated as *La1ère*'s written articles are analysed; it is likely that *La1ère*'s television stories and written articles would produce the same or similar frames of France and Europe/EU.

1.4 Theoretical basis for this research

This research also functions as a test case for Entman's cascading activation framing theory, which argues that some news frames have a greater capacity to spread throughout society, activate and resonate with the public and influence policy making (Entman 2003, p.419). Entman uses his hierarchical 'cascade' model, where the state is placed at the top and the public is placed at the bottom, to demonstrate the mechanics behind the framing process and why the state is best able to influence framing (Entman 2003, p.419).

This case study adds to the literature of media framing as it tests Entman's theory in four unique ways. Firstly, the hierarchical structure of Entman's cascade was originally designed with respect to the United States (US) and so this study added to the scholarship by applying the theory to a non-US context (Entman 2003, p.419). In Entman's model, the White House is placed at the top, as the most influential actor, and congress members and ex-officials are depicted as of secondary importance (Entman 2003, p.419). While the cascading activation framing theory has been applied and adapted by other scholars (Valenzano 2009; Dekavalla 2016; Dekavalla 2018; Canel and Gurrionero 2016;

Aruguete and Calvo 2018) to different countries and political structures, a test case in the yet unstudied New Caledonian context adds to this scholarship. The New Caledonia context is particularly unique because the administration, *l'Etat*, led by Macron, is geographically distant from local politics and current affairs.

Secondly, this study adds to the scholarship of media framing by analysing a referendum context. While election framing contexts are relatively well studied, there is limited scholarship on media framing in referenda. While this study does add to this scholarship, it is somewhat limited in doing so as it did not analyse all media articles discussing the referendum. Articles were only analysed if they discussed France and Europe/EU in the context of the referendum. This is a strength of this study and the fourth key reason this research adds to the scholarship of media framing. When examining the existing literature in preparation for this study, no examples were found of studies which examine a subject in the context of an event or issue, such as a referendum or election.

Thirdly, this 2018 case study of the cascading activation framing theory adds to the scholarship because of its contemporaneity. 15 years after Entman introduced the cascading activation framing theory, the world has irrevocably changed. While Entman and Usher (2018) have adapted the cascading activation framing theory, they did so in a way particularly oriented to US media structures e.g. republican ideological media as compared to liberal ideological media (Entman and Usher 2018, p.303). This study adds to the scholarship by analysing a contemporary non-US context.

1.5 Thesis structure

Chapter 2 of this research explains why New Caledonia is having a referendum on independence and offers background to some of the contemporary issues. Chapter 3 reviews the literature around media framing, discussing the theories and models applied to previous research. Chapter 3 also proposes a version of the cascading activation framing model applicable to the New Caledonian context. Chapter 4 provides an overview of possible methods for this type of study. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 discuss the empirical findings of the article analysis and interview analysis. Chapter 7 brings together the theories of this research and the empirical findings.

In its conclusions (Chapter 8) this research finds that, although framed thematically in a variety of ways, France is typically portrayed on the *neutral-to-positive* side of the emotive spectrum. In the articles where France is most visible and salient, positive emotive framing remains the leading trend. Europe/EU is not framed negatively, although it does receive a more neutral and apathetic portrayal. As France and Europe/EU tend to be framed emotively in a fairly consistent way, this thesis observes that there are few direct tensions between framing efforts. Rather, this thesis observes that there is tension between which frames are considered most important. This thesis advances the idea of

importance framing contests, arguing that they should be included in the conceptual framework of media framing.

As a test case for Entman's cascading activation framing theory, this thesis finds that the hierarchical 'cascade' model is applicable to the modern-day New Caledonian context, albeit with some alterations. This thesis argues that the state and local elites should both be placed in the top tier of the framing model as the president's capacity to influence framing can be limited by factors of location and scope of discussion. If the president is not in the relevant territory and/or not able to contribute to the discussion, the local elites may have greater capacity to influence framing. This thesis also builds on Entman and Usher's (2018) updated version of the cascading activation framing model to argue that social media should be fully incorporated into the hierarchical model.

This thesis offers new ideas and new analytical mechanisms and theoretical constructs for future research. Firstly, when analysing a subject in the context of an event/issue, multiple indicators of that subject should be synthesised – as this research did with visibility and emotiveness – in order to determine which articles are the most salient. Researchers can then judge which thematic frames are included in the most salient articles. Secondly, future research should consider the distinction between direct framing contests and importance framing contests. Thirdly, this thesis' updated model, including social media, should be tested for applicability in different contexts beyond New Caledonia.

2. Context

2.1 Introduction

The legal basis for the 2018 New Caledonia independence referendum is derived directly from the 1998 Nouméa Accord.¹ It is important to understand the content of the Nouméa Accord, and its predecessor the Matignon-Oudinot Accords, and the context in which they developed. Many of the issues and topics discussed in news articles in the build-up to the referendum stem from issues and events at the political forefront when the Accords were signed. In order to better understand the political and media landscape of 2018, this chapter will provide an overview of the relevant historical events.

2.2 Early colonisation

The French story of colonisation in New Caledonia is symptomatic of the harshest realities of colonisation, resulting in the subjugation, marginalisation and traumatising of the indigenous Kanak (Kircher 1986, p.4).² After annexation by France in 1853,³ New Caledonia quickly became a penal colony and then a settler colony (Berman 1998, p.294). Between 1864 and 1896 some 20,000 convicts were sent to New Caledonia from France (Kircher 1986, p.5). The process of Kanak land dispossession began in 1855 when the Governor of New Caledonia proclaimed that Kanak could only occupy land under cultivation; 'vacant' land was given to the increasing number of settlers for crop cultivation and cattle rearing (Berman 1998, p.295). Much of this 'vacant' land would not have been considered vacant by Kanak. In 1868, the French government refused to acknowledge the clan as the legal owner of occupied land and forcibly confined Kanak to government-created reserves (Berman 1998, p.295-296; Lyons 1986, p.51; Kircher 1986, p.5). The effects of land dispossession were further exacerbated with the confinement of Kanak to reservations and by wandering, unfenced cattle damaging remaining Kanak land (Kircher 1986, p.5-6; Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992, p.66; Berman 1998, p.297). In response, the Kanak launched a series of revolts (Lyons 1986, p.61-62). While these revolts were unsuccessful, the leaders and legends of this time fed into the narrative of the 1970s Kanak revival and the 1980s struggle for independence (Berman 1998, p.297).⁴

¹ The Nouméa Accord outlined there would be an independence referendum between 2014 and 2019, provided three-fifths of the members of Congress voted to hold it (Chappell 2015, p.58).

² 'Kanak' refers to the indigenous people of New Caledonia. Previously, the term 'Melanesian' or the spelling variant 'Canaque' have been used to refer to this ethnic group (Fisher 2014, p.4).

³ The annexation by France is known as the *prise de possession* and was featured strongly in media discussion in 2018 as Macron brought the original document of the *prise de possession* back to New Caledonia (LNC 2018a).

⁴ Admiration for the Kanak Chief Atai, who led the most violent revolt in 1878, was passed down through the collective memory of Kanak elders and was instrumental in the identity formation of the student radicals of the 1970s (Chappell 2013b, p.101-103; Chappell 2013a, p.4).

2.3 Emergence of Kanak nationalist identity

Harsh crackdowns from the French government in the 1950s and 1960s pushed many Kanak autonomists to consider seeking independence (Chappell 2015, p.58). In 1951, the *Union Calédonienne* (UC), a multi-ethnic party which held the support of most Kanak, encouraged New Caledonians to vote to remain an Overseas Territory of France (Connell 1988, p.5). As autonomists rather than independentists, the UC hoped that they could obtain progressively more autonomy for New Caledonia within the French Republic (Berman 1998, p.305; Henningham 1988, p.638, Gendron 2014, p.101). However, the French government and settlers (known as *caldoches*) were increasingly anxious that Kanak would come to desire independence (Berman 1998, p.306). This led to a series of moves aimed at stifling the UC, and the French government significantly decreased the level of autonomy of New Caledonia (Berman 1998, p.306; Gendron 2014, p.103). This showed Kanak that their political power and influence, already limited compared to pre-colonial times, could be taken away at any moment according to the whim of the French government.

Increased migration to New Caledonia further tipped the balance of power away from Kanak, prompting some to turn to more radical action.⁵ In 1972, the French Prime Minister wrote to the Minister for Overseas Territories and Departments, asking him to facilitate “massive immigration of metropolitan French” to New Caledonia in order to consolidate it as a French country (Fraser 1988, p.6; Berman 1998, p.309; Chappell 2013a, p.1). He wrote that increased migration should improve the “numerical balance of the races”, as “indigenous nationalist claims will only be avoided if the communities from outside the Pacific form the majority” (Fraser 1988, p.6). The French Prime Minister’s attempt to make the Kanak a minority succeeded; by 1976, the Kanak made up only 42% of the population (Hemmingham 1988, p. 639).

As a minority population, Kanak argued that only Kanak should be able to vote in an independence referendum (Berman 1998, p.315). However, the French government insisted on the principle of majority rule (Berman 1998, p.315). This hard line prompted Kanak to “to abandon the existing legal and political process in pursuing their goal of independence”; the *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste* (FLNKS) boycotted the 1984 elections and the 1987 independence referendum (Berman 1998, p.316, p.322).

⁵ Prior to the 1980s, small groups of radical students and other radical nationalists had started to form, for example, the *Fouards Rouges* (Red Scarves) (Chappell 2013b, p.94)

2.4 Kanak Revolt

Over the 1980s violent confrontations characterised the divide between the Kanak and French settlers and other migrants (Berman 1998, p.289).⁶ French settlers and migrants from other French territories typically supported continued French presence, to justify their attachment to and existence in New Caledonia (Berman 1998, p.320). One of the most violent episodes of the 1980s, also known as the *événements* period, occurred around the time of the first round of Presidential elections (Berman 1998, p.324-325). Chirac was the incumbent seeking re-election and was under pressure to show he could handle the Kanak “terrorists” (Chappell 2013a, p.4). Two days before the elections several Kanak raided military barracks, killing four gendarmes and taking 27 hostages to a cave in the island of Ouvéa (Chappell 2013a, p.4). In response, Chirac ordered 300 French paramilitary forces to attack the cave, resulting in the deaths of two policemen and 19 Kanak (Berman 1998, p.325-326; Chappell 2013a, p.4). While Chirac may have been attempting to look strong as the incumbent leader, the shock of the Ouvéa hostage crisis massacre contributed to his electoral defeat (Connell 1988, p.14; Berman 1998, p.326; Chappell 2013a, p.4).

2.5 Paving the way for today

The Matignon-Oudinot Accords of 1988 were the result of an intense period of negotiations between the new Mitterrand-led French government, the Kanak indépendantistes and the pro-French loyalists (Berman 1998, p.289; Fisher 2014, p.8) following the Ouvéa hostage crisis. The Matignon-Oudinot Accords called for a) a referendum to be held in 1998 once tensions had cooled, b) for increased internal autonomy, and c) for economic and social rebalancing to bridge the gap between Kanak and settlers (Alley *et al.* 1989, p.154; Berman 1998, p.289-290; Chappell 2015, p.59). The Accords also effectively froze the electoral composition as it was in 1988; the Matignon-Oudinot Accords stipulated that new migrants arriving before the proposed 1998 referendum would not have the right to vote in that referendum (Alley *et al.* 1989, p.154). The Accords did succeed in the goal of achieving relative peace and calm, however, they also created division within the Kanak community; some Kanak disagreed with the FLNKS signing of the Accords and there was divided opinion on the Accords across both political factions (Alley *et al.* 1989, p.154; Berman 1998, p.332).

The referendum that was meant to be held in 1998 was postponed by another 20 years with the Nouméa Accord of 1998, which was also negotiated between the French government and local leaders (Chappell 2015, p.58). The Nouméa Accord stipulated further transfers of autonomy and governance competencies from Paris to the local government, making New Caledonia a *sui generis* country within the French Republic (Chappell 2013a, p.1; Chappell 2015, p.58). Aware of the fact that the Kanak

⁶ 73 people died during the Kanak revolt of the 1980s (Chappell 2013a, p.1).

remained a minority group – and would henceforth likely always be – the Nouméa Accord also created a ‘special’ electorate that sought to somewhat rebalance the ratio of Kanak to Metropolitan French for any future referenda (Maclellan 2010, p.6; Chappell 2015, p.59). As a result, franchise in the 2018 referendum was limited to Kanak and any French person eligible to have participated in the 1998 referendum (including the offspring of such residents) (New Caledonia 2018). The electoral roll remained a point of discussion throughout 2018 (LNC 2018d; *La1ère* 2018b; Mainguet 2018j; Frédière 2018i).

2.6 Contemporary bipolarity and divisions

To a large extent, New Caledonia remains a country of two halves. In 2010, Chappell commented that the political landscape in New Caledonia is split between “those who support full independence and those who want enlarged autonomy” (the status quo at this point) (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2010 p. 432). Local government “turmoil” in 2011 and the results of the French election in 2012 contributed to continued polarisation (Chappell 2013a p.1). In his review of the 2014 provincial elections in New Caledonia, the last to be held before the independence referendum, Chappell observed that disagreements regarding which flag to use and the official name of the country “can harden politicised ethnic divisions” (2015, p.58).

While it is often suggested that political lines still tend to mirror ethnic ones, there is increasing evidence to suggest that ethnicity does not solely determine political allegiance (Chappell 2015, p.60). There has been fragmentation within both camps in recent years and there is greater diversity in reasons why people hold pro or anti-independence beliefs (Fisher 2014, p.1). In 2014, a United Nations committee visiting New Caledonia found that some Kanak opposed independence while some of European descent supported it (Chappell 2015, p.60).

2.7 Referendum campaign

Over the course of 2018, several key events took place in New Caledonia. The date of the referendum was set on March 19th 2018 (Frédière 2018j), but the exact wording took a little longer to develop. The wording of the question was determined by the committee of signatories who were guided by French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe (AFP 2018c). From April onwards, the political parties began to commence their campaigns (LNC 2018c; LNC 2018e; LNC 2018f). French President Macron planned a visit to New Caledonia in early May. During this period, the *anti-indépendantistes* planned a ‘blue white red’ march for all New Caledonians (even those not eligible to vote) to express their loyalty to France (Frédière 2018k; Frédière 2018l). The “symbols” of Macron’s visit, such as his decision to return the *prise de possession* and his visit to Ouvéa for the 30 years commemoration, were discussed in the media (ALP 2018b; LNC 2018a; AFP 2018d; Mainguet 2018c). In August and September, the Parti

Travailliste (PT), an *indépendantiste* party, and the *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et des Exploités* (USTKE), an *indépendantiste* trade union group, decided to boycott the referendum, a move reminiscent of the 1980s election and referendum boycotts (Mainguet 2018k; René 2018). In late October, it was announced that Edouard Philippe would arrive in New Caledonia the day after the referendum and that Macron would give a televised address the night the results were announced (La1ère 2018a; LNC 2018g).

See Appendix 1 for a list of political parties and key parties represented in Congress in 2018.

3. Theory

3.1. Introduction

Within the field of media analysis, there is much scholarship dedicated to the concept of media framing. This concept of framing was first theorised by sociologist Erving Goffman (1975) who argued that “frames” are used by individuals to make sense of the world around them “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” (Goffman 1975, p.21). This conception of framing was built into the field of media analysis by Gitlin (Gitlin 1980), where it was further developed by other scholars of the 1980s and 1990s before becoming one of the leading mass communication theories of the 21st century (Baran and Davis 2015, p.322). Today, scholars use the concept of media framing to analyse the social and political contexts of news frames, how they are developed by journalists as a part of the news creation process, and how individuals receiving frames (news readers or viewers) use them to extract meaning from news (Baran and Davis 2015, p.322). This chapter will review the literature surrounding media framing, concluding that Entman’s (2003; 2004) cascading activation framing model, albeit with some adaptations, remains relevant to the 2018 New Caledonian context addressed in this thesis.

3.2. Origins of framing

First developed by Goffman, framing theory is an attempt to understand how individuals construct meaning and make sense of the world around them (Goffman 1975). The concept of framing was first linked to the study of news discourse by sociologists Gitlin (1980) and Tuchman (1978). Gitlin argues that frames, although “largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (1980, p.7). Tuchman and Gitlin were both interested in how news functions as a “stratified social resource”, meaning that news media and their frames are more accessible and pliable to some actors over others (Tuchman 1978, p.133).

Like Gitlin and Tuchman, Gamson was a social constructivist and was interested in using framing to explain the influence news has on society (Baran and Davis 2015, p.323). Gamson *et al.* respond to the previous scholarship by starting to pull the field together (1992, p.385). Gamson *et al.* critique the prior ambiguities in framing scholarship and posit that frames should be “a storyline or unfolding narrative about an issue” (1992, p.385).

Gamson and Modigliani argue that studying media discourse and framing is highly relevant for those interested in public opinion, as media both reflects and contributes to the formation of public opinion (1989, p.3). Entman (1993) also stresses the importance of studying framing, arguing that frames play “a major role in the exertion of political power” (p.55). If a politician’s agenda is advanced through

framing, either by coincidence or by organised sponsorship of a frame, then their frames will reach a wider number of people.

3.3. Factors influencing frames

Gamson identifies three factors which can be used to determine the prominence of frames. The first is the idea of cultural resonance: frames are drawn from or connected to shared cultural narratives, group myths and the broader political culture (Gamson 1989, p.161; Gamson 1992, p.135). For example, frames of freedom and new starts might be more likely to be prominent in a culture that narrates itself as a nation of immigrants.

Secondly, the prominence of frames in a text is, in part, aided by the work of “sponsors” (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, p.6). These sponsors, usually organisations, bring their ideas and frames to journalists by targeting their actions to the news needs, habits, and demands of journalists (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, p.6).

Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p.8) argue that official sponsors, such as political organisations represented in government, have an advantage in determining framing, as they are more likely to have “routine relationships” with journalists. This is due to the third factor, media organisation and practice. Routine relationships with official sponsors is one such organisational media norm that favours official sponsors. Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p.8) argue that there are other practices, such as the norm of presenting a “balance” of opinions, which may favour the rivals of official sponsors, i.e. the opposition parties.

Like Gamson, Entman (1993, p.53) identifies factors influencing the salience of frames: the placement, the degree of repetition and association with culturally familiar symbols. Additionally, he argues that frames will gain more prominence if they align with pre-existing frames and ideas guiding a receiver (Entman 1993, p.53). These last two ideas - association with culturally familiar symbols and alignment with the receiver’s pre-existing frames - overlap with Gamson’s cultural resonance. Later, Entman (2003, p.417) revises these factors of salience to just magnitude, synthesising the ideas of placement, repetition and cultural resonance.

3.4 Detecting frames

Gamson argues that the most important content to analyse when identifying frames is the “interpretative commentary” surrounding the information, rather than the facts themselves (Gamson 1989, p.158). Gamson also reminds potential framing analysts that a frame may be included in news content as a result of multiple “senders”; the editor, the journalist, those quoted etc (Gamson 1989,

p.158). In addition, framing could occur unconsciously with no motive, or could be intentionally serving certain interests (Gamson 1989, p.158).

Graber argues that one of the biggest weaknesses of analysing framing is the potential for different analysts to infer different meanings from the text (Gamson 1989, p.158). Gamson responds by arguing that analysis should focus on the “encoders rather than the decoders” (Gamson 1989, p.158). That is to say that the frame intended by the sender is what should come under analysis. Although this is not a perfect fix to the issue, as even the most informed assumptions of a sender would likely be influenced by the understandings of the analyst as a receiver, it does provide a useful check for those undertaking framing analyses.

3.5. Fractured paradigm

By 1993, after several different scholars had advanced the concept of framing in several different directions, Entman observes that studies of framing used vastly inconsistent definitions and conceptualisations (Entman 1993, p.51). His consequent attempt to identify and define the concept and its characteristics proved successful, and this 1993 definition of framing is the most persistent and widely cited (see Hallahan 1999; McCombs 2005; Weaver 2007; Matthes and Kohring 2008; Rowling 2015; Dekavalla 2018). This 1993 definition of framing is the one which will be employed for the purposes of this research:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman 1993, p.52, italics in original).

Essentially, Entman holds that framing occurs when journalists make decisions about which aspects of the news to include and which to cut. In doing so, certain aspects are given more weight than others so that they are made more “noticeable, meaningful, or memorable” (1993, p.53).

Entman holds that there are four functions of framing: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements, and suggesting remedies (1993, p. 52). While just a single sentence could perform more than one of these functions, a particular frame will not necessarily include all of them (Entman 1993, p.52).

Entman also hypothesises that there are four locations in which frames can be found: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture (1993, p.52). The conscious or unconscious decisions of communicators have an impact on shaping the frame, and this is often influenced by the frames or “schemata” that guide the communicator’s own belief systems (Entman 1993, p.52).

Unsurprisingly, frames are also found in texts, largely as a result of the decisions of the communicators. Like the communicators, receivers also have frames or schemata which guide their own belief systems. This may be influenced by the frames they find in texts, although that is not to say that the frames portrayed in the text will always reflect the frames that guide the receiver's thinking (Entman 1993, p.52). Lastly, frames make up culture; Entman describes culture as a set of commonly invoked frames which guide the thinking of most people (Entman 1993, p.53).

3.6. From indexing to cascading activation

From this scholarship on media and framing, came Bennett's analysis of the relationship between media and government in the democratic process. This is known as the "indexing" hypothesis (Bennett 1990). Bennett hypothesises that the work of journalists indexes or reflects the range of voices and viewpoints as expressed in mainstream government debate (Bennett 1990, p.106). In other words, the range of debate in news media is limited to the range of argument explored by mainstream government officials.

Althaus *et al.* (1996, p.408) use Entman's four functions of framing to highlight the limitations on media debate given the indexing hypothesis; the only problem definitions and policy suggestions present in the media would be those already suggested by government officials.

Entman (2003, p.417) argues that one of the key contributions of the indexing hypothesis was its emphasis that elite opposition is the vital determinant in deciding whether the news frames will deviate from the framing of top officials i.e. the White House. In other words, when elites do not disagree, and the White House line goes unchallenged, that consensus is indexed in news media. However, when elites disagree, that disagreement is reflected in the media and alternate frames develop.

Entman's 2003 article and 2004 book saw the introduction of a model that was designed to replace the indexing hypothesis: the cascading activation framing model. Entman (2003, p.416) argues that both the indexing hypothesis and the alternative hegemony approach were outdated and did not consider how politics and media behaviour had changed following the end of the Cold War. Entman sees the hegemony theory, which stresses elite's agreement, as irrelevant following the collapse of the Cold War consensus when elite disagreement had become the new normal without the need for solidarity in the face of a great external threat (Entman 2004, p.5).

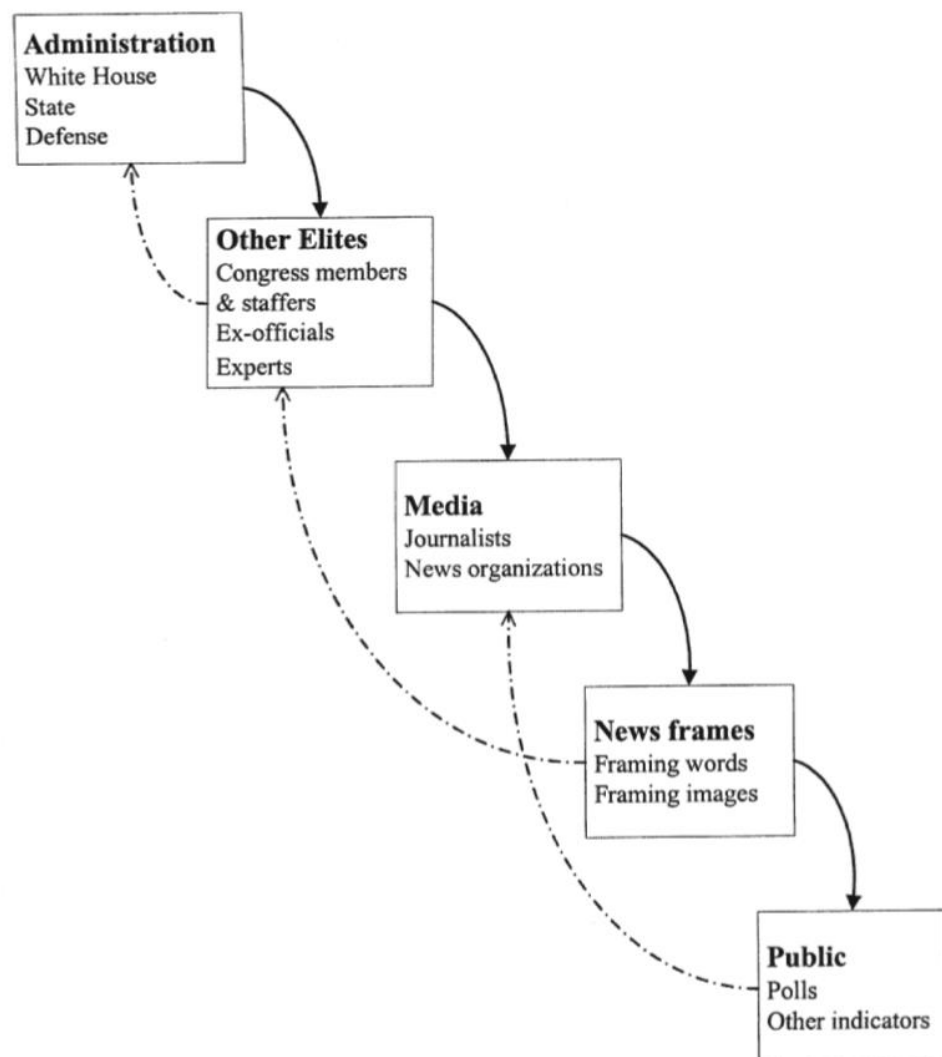
Entman (2003, p.417) does acknowledge the contributions of the indexing hypothesis in emphasizing the importance of elite discord in determining frames. However, he argues that it does not go so far to explain why leaders sometimes disagree with White House framing, thus resulting in framing

contests, and why sometimes elites do not (Entman 2003, 417). In his 2003 article, Entman advances two key ideas: firstly, frame dominance and contestation, and secondly, a hierarchical structure which models which actors have the most power to influence frames.

Entman (2003, p.418) presents frames as if on a continuum; one end of the continuum represents a frame totally dominating, preventing any inclusion of alternative frames, and the other end of the continuum represents parity between competing frames.

The cascading activation framing model shows how ideas and frames travel through the media network, being shaped as they go (Entman 2003, p.419). The model intends to provide an explanation for who will win any given framing contest, thus gaining a political upper hand, by showing at what stages various actors contribute and influence the frame (Entman 2003, p.419).

Figure 3.1: Entman's cascading activation framing model



Source: Entman 2003, p.419

The hierarchical structure of the model is intentional, as it represents how those at the highest levels of the cascade have the greatest ability to promote the spread of frames (Entman 2003, p.420). Entman uses the waterfall metaphor of the cascade to illuminate how it is much harder to spread frames from the lower levels to the upper, as is shown in the diagram by the weaker, dotted lines going upwards (Entman 2003, p.420). Despite this challenge in pushing frames back up the cascade, Entman's model does show that the public can be both receivers and senders of frames. Public opinion can affect the thinking of elites, typically through the medium of the media, consequently altering the frames which the elites then send down the cascade (Entman 2003, p.420).

Entman's cascading activation framing model outlines four variables to explain why elite discord and consequent frame contests can occur: motivations, cultural congruence, power and strategy (Entman 2004, p.13). Cultural congruence determines the ease in which a frame will travel through the network; a more congruent frame will likely already exist in the minds of receivers, thereby allowing the frame to just be reinforced rather than be entirely introduced (Entman 2004, p.14). So, using the cultural congruence variable, researchers can assess whether the substance of a frame has such cultural congruence that no other frames will hold, or whether a frame has enough cultural congruence that it will spread faster and more thoroughly through the cascade than other less congruent alternative frames.

Entman (both 2003 and 2004) applies his new model to a series of case studies, thoroughly testing his hypotheses through these applications. Many scholars have since applied Entman's cascade model (see Bennett *et al.* 2006; Valenzano 2009; Handley 2010; Rowling *et al.* 2011; Rowling *et al.* 2015; Canel and Gurrionero 2016; Aruguete and Calvo 2018).

Some of these scholars attempt to further develop the cascade model, taking account for some gaps left by Entman. Rowling *et al.* (2011, p.1046) observe that while the idea of cultural resonance is important, its definition remains vague. In response, Rowling *et al.* (2011, p.1046) argue that in moments of national crises, the most culturally resonant frames would be those that protect national identity.

Although the cascade model has been widely employed by scholars, these case studies tend to be limited to instances where the White House and other elites activate frames after a particularly controversial event or foreign policy issues, such as the Abu Ghraib scandal, the War on Terror and the My Lai massacre (see Bennett *et al.* 2006; Valenzano 2009; Rowling *et al.* 2015). As these studies focus on the framing of a government decision or actions undertaken by representatives of the nation, such as the army, they tend to discuss things like national identity (Rowling *et al.* 2015, p.314). Due to the highly controversial nature of these news events and the strong ramifications this holds for

national identity and sentiment, the process of framing in these instances may not be reflective of framing in more ordinary situations or situations of sustained policy debate.

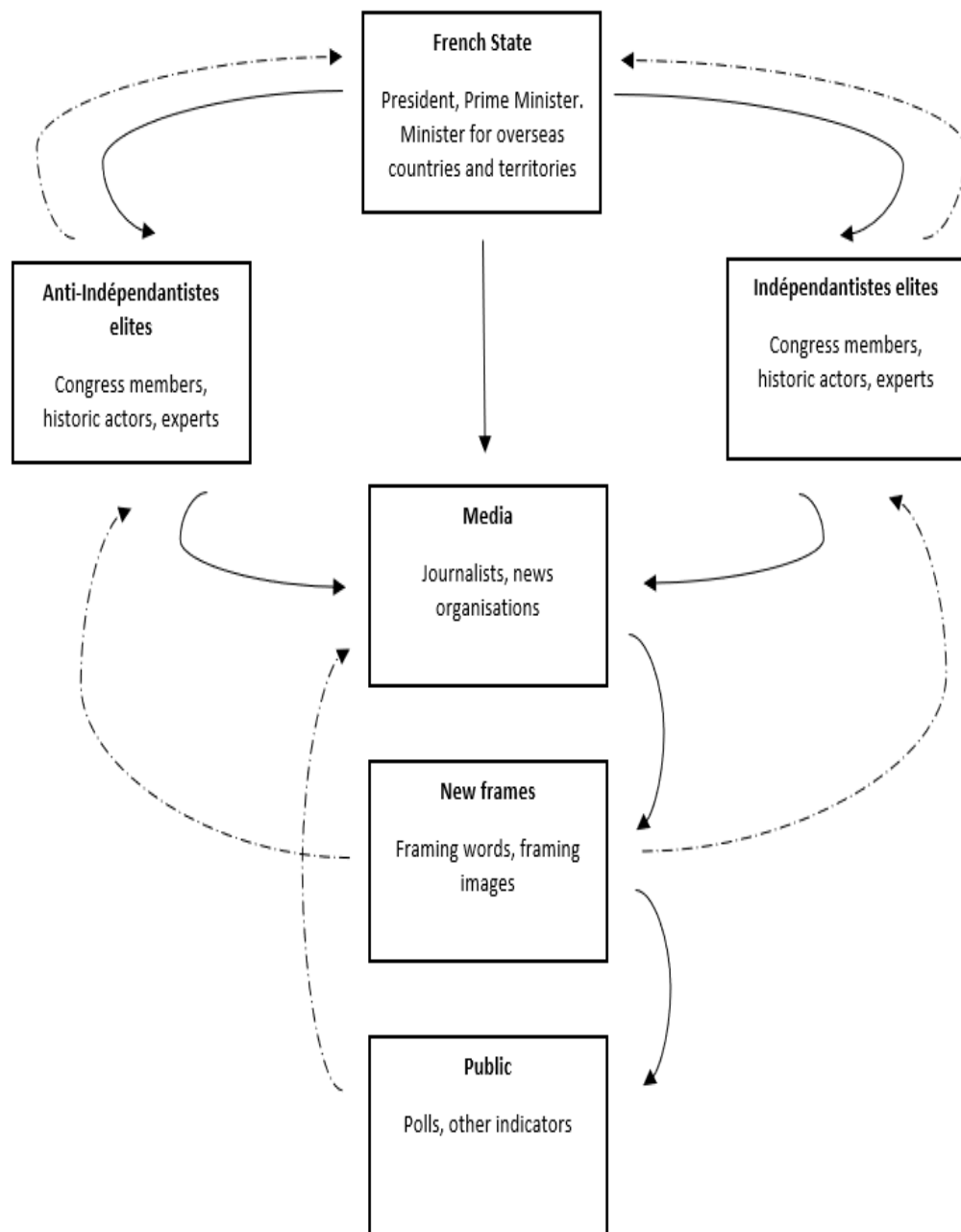
Fahmy *et al.* (2010) provide one of the rare case studies that is not characterised by a pattern of shock scandal, immediate framing and counter-framing, and then slow fading of public interest; their research analyses President Bush's ability to frame the public's views on stem cell research, concluding that despite being at the top of the cascade, his ability to influence the public's views was limited.

To further advance the field, more research should be conducted using a diverse range of case studies. This research goes some way to filling that gap by analysing media framing of a referendum campaign. As this research is taking place at the end of a 30-year long peace-building and consolidation process, it is expected that the manner and style of framing will be more measured and considerate, to provide a contrast to the many other case studies whose context is a country actively engaging in warfare.

Other scholars of media framing, like Aruguete and Calvo (2018) and Canel and Gurrionero (2016) and Valenzano (2009), apply the cascade model outside of the US context where it was created, replacing the role of the White House with that of other nations' leading government administrations. These case studies show that the cascading activation framing model is still relevant outside of the US, although some adaptations may be required to account for slightly different local contexts.

As explained in Chapter 2 of this research, New Caledonian politics has historically been divided in terms of attitude towards independence. As such, an application of the cascade framing model in the New Caledonian context could look like:

Figure 3.2 Proposed cascade model for the New Caledonian context

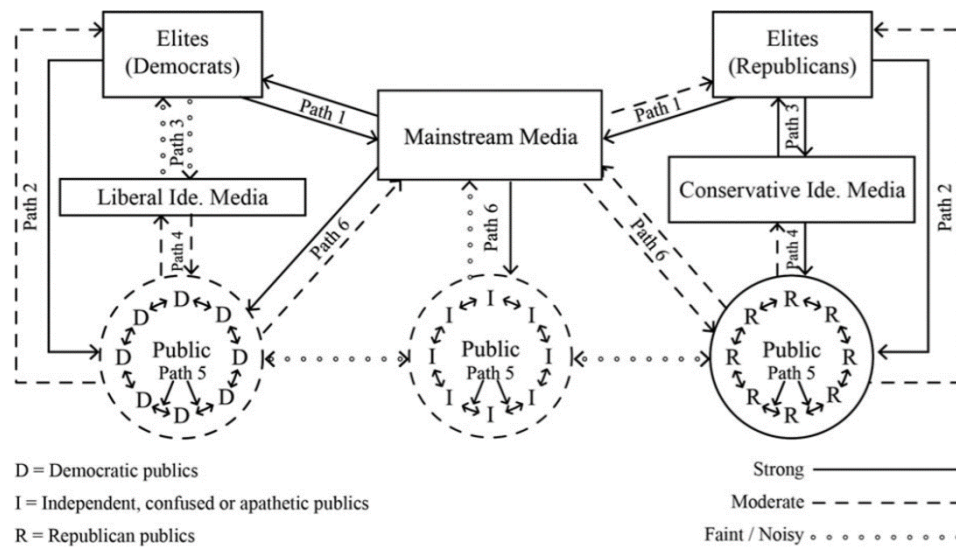


Source: Author's own

3.7. Framing in the digital era

Although the cascading activation framing model has since been updated by Entman himself (Entman and Usher 2018, p.303), the original model still holds much relevance and importance to the present day. Unlike the updated model which details different roles for Republican and Democrat elites and ideological news (Figure 3.3), the relative simplicity and generic qualities of the original model allow it to be used in a wider variety of contexts.

Figure 3.3: Updated cascading activation framing model



Source: Entman and Usher 2018, p.303

At its core, the original model depicts the hierarchies at play in frame production, which allow those at the top of the cascade to have greater influence in determining the frames sent to receivers. This issue remains a timeless one, and the relationship between political power and control over news frames has been of importance to scholars since the early years of media framing studies (see Gamson and Modigliani 1989, Gamson *et al.* 1992, Gamson 1989).

The new model does provide discussion on factors which have changed, or are changing, media practices and how frames form in a digital era. These include the rise of platforms like Twitter or Google which host content, algorithms which can affect what articles publics see based off their previous preferences, digital analytics which measure and record online users' data for future targeting, ideological media which often rejects traditional media norms of impartiality and objectivity, and rogue actors like bots, trolls, hackers, or disseminators of fake news (Entman and Usher 2018, p.299).

Entman and Usher label these factors as pump-valves, consequently bringing them into the cascade metaphor (Entman and Usher 2018, p.299). Together, these pump-valves work to disrupt traditional hierarchies. Although these modern factors challenge Entman's 'cascade' idea, they do not entirely erode it, as Entman's updated version still clearly shows. Entman argues that elites still have the power to withhold and release critical information, and shape frames in traditional ways with speeches, hearings, media events, etc. (Entman and Usher 2018, p.304).

Modern media practices might also entrench the power of elites. Through platforms like Twitter and by using platforms' functions such as live streaming, elites are better able to directly connect with the public, eliminating journalists' framing input. Elites can also point to factors such as fake news as a reason to distrust traditional media, giving themselves further framing power. Entman and Usher account for this in their updated model by showing a weaker arrow line going from mainstream media to Republican publics, as they Republican publics tend to trust mainstream media less (Entman and Usher 2018, p.302).

That is not to say that researchers of framing and mass communication should discard analysing traditional mainstream media altogether. In fact, this research persists in such a study. Firstly, traditional news media is still worth studying in the digital age as the very fact that it exists means that people are still reading it and, thus, receiving its frames.

Secondly, the ability of journalists to adapt should not be underestimated. Take for example the #MeToo movement. Although initiated on Twitter it was hardly ignored by mainstream media. As the movement was stemming from Twitter, it could be assumed that the frames on Twitter would be mostly be reflected in news reporting of the movement. Paterson argues (2015, as quoted in Dekavalla 2016, p.794) that key contributors to online media tend to have read traditional media, and that the material dominating debate in traditional media spheres was the same content as what was being debated on online spheres. As such, a researcher with limitations as to the size and scope of their research would still be able to analyse the frames that the public are receiving through news media analysis.

Analyses of traditional news media may remain more or less relevant, depending on the context. For the New Caledonian context, where there have historically been only two media sources, an analysis of these two traditional sources should capture the scope of frames present.

3.8 Framing for referenda

While media framing in election campaigns has received moderate amounts of coverage, very little research has been conducted on the topic of media in a referendum context. The work of de Vreese

and Semetko (2004) and Schuck and de Vreese (2006) specifically focuses on the Danish referendum on the introduction of the Euro and the referenda of EU enlargement. These studies are more interested in how reporting influences individuals' opinions, rather than analysing the frames in the news content and their formation through the media network (Schuck and de Vreese 2006, p.6).

Dekavalla (2016; 2018) is one of the few scholars who looks specifically at framing in referendum campaigns. Dekavalla (2016, p.743) emphasises that referenda are different political events to elections, as they are a consultation of the public, rather than an elite competition, on what can often be non-partisan issues. Dekavalla (2016, p.800) observes that a generic election campaign frame that can be applied to some referendum campaigns is the "strategic game" frame, which presents campaigns as a competition between opponent sides. In her case study of the Scottish Independence referendum, Dekavalla (2016, p.801-804; 2018, p.1596-1597) also observes policy frames and frames more specific to the referendum, such as the referendum as a democratic achievement.

Unlike other studies that analyse the entirety of frames in referendua (de Vreese and Semetko 2004; Schuck and de Vreese 2006; Dekavalla 2016), this research focuses specifically on frames of France and Europe/EU in the referendum context. By analysing a complex political topic that might not necessarily be in the prime spotlight of global media, this research adds to the field of literature of framing by exploring how the framing process occurs without the distractions of a major scandal or tragedy but covering essential political reality in democratic societies.

3.9 Summary

The review of the literature undertaken above suggests that Entman's cascading activation framing model remains one of the most relevant models to underpin research on media framing of the 2018 referendum in New Caledonia. In some respects, Entman's model is a continuation of the indexing hypothesis, making it fit for purpose in the post-Cold War and, now, digital era. Like the indexing hypothesis, the cascade model focusses on the role of elites in shaping frames. In addition, Entman includes the public in his model, arguing that they can also, albeit with greater difficulty, send frames back up the power hierarchy to journalists and even elites. Entman's original 2003/2004 model is most relevant to this research, as, unlike the US-specific 2018 updated version, it is able to be adapted for the New Caledonian context. This research will draw on aspects of Entman and Usher's recent additions, in particular, the relationship between social media and traditional media. By analysing media framing specifically of France and Europe/EU over the course of the referendum campaign, this research will be able to explore the framing process as it occurs naturally in the 'regular' political process in a democracy, rather than, as is so often researched, immediately after a scandal or tragedy.

4. Methods

4.1 Introduction

Content analyses of media to detect frames are a popular and well-established method in political communication studies (Rowling *et al.* 2015; Dekavalla 2016; Rowling *et al.* 2011; Aruguete and Calvo 2018; Canel and Gurrionero 2016; Chaban *et al.* 2006; Chaban *et al.* 2012; Chaban *et al.* 2014; Chaban *et al.* 2017). This chapter functions both as a review of content analysis methods and as an outline of the methodological processes undertaken for this research. This chapter also discusses the value of semi-structured interviews and describes how in-person semi-structured interviews were used to complement the content analysis. The first section of this chapter will review the literature surrounding establishing a suitable sample for content analysis. The second section reviews the process of content analysis, examining how different methods of analysis can add to the research. The third section considers semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Content analysis

4.2.1 Establishing a sample

4.2.1.1 *Range of content*

Typically, studies employing media content analysis identify what range of content is to be analysed. In addition to media content, sometimes other types of content are analysed in order to draw a comparison. The types of content relevant to the study would depend on that study's research question. For example, Rowling *et al.* (2015, p. 317-318), in addition to studying the content of the news media from three major sources, decided to analyse the content such as speeches and press releases by members of the White House, military, Senate and House members. The different sources of content were relevant to Rowling *et al.* as they were analysing the extent to which White House frames were contested by Congress and how this discourse was reflected (or not) in the press (Rowling *et al.* 2015, p. 317). As this thesis focused on exploring how France and Europe/EU were framed in news media in the New Caledonian referendum context, only media sources underwent content analysis.

4.2.1.2 *News media types and sources*

Secondly, researchers must identify which news media sources will be analysed. Newspapers, television news, radio news, and social media platforms that function as news-deliverers could all be relevant sources of media, depending on the research questions and hypotheses of the study. When there are multiple different sources available of the preferred type, researchers must decide which specific sources they will use. Canel and Gurrionero's study is typical of most analyses of news media as they choose best-selling papers representing the ideological spectrum of the national press (2016, p. 138). New Caledonia has a very small media environment: there is only one daily newspaper (LNC)

and one longstanding, well-established television channel (*La1ère*).⁷ Importantly, *La1ère* has an online written media component. This thesis chose to analyse only written content: the news published online by LNC and the written news texts published online by *La1ère*.

4.2.1.3 Period of analysis

Thirdly, researchers must decide the time period for analysis. Some studies have a single period, while others analyse content from multiple time periods. For example, Rowling *et al.* (2011, p. 317) decided to analyse content discussing the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq published between April 28th 2004 and July 6th 2004. This was most appropriate for their research as April 28th was the date their issue first appeared in the news, and July 6th was when publication stilled (Rowling *et al.* 2001, p. 317). In contrast, Dekavalla (2016, p. 799) analysed content published during seven specific weeks throughout a two-year referendum campaign. When deciding what weeks to analyse, Dekavalla (2016, p. 799) attempted to cover as wide a range of content as possible, choosing weeks that were characterised by different events. This thesis combines the benefits of both methods, choosing a long period marked by logical start and end points: the 19th March 2018 (when the date of the referendum was decided) to the 3rd November 2018 (the last day of the referendum campaign).

4.2.1.4 Search terms

Another important consideration is what keywords will be used to define what content is analysed. Keywords, or search terms, typically describe the subject of the research. It may be relevant to have a range of different ways of saying the same thing. Rowling *et al.* (2011, p. 317) use different spellings of “My Lai” and different names for the location, as well as the last names of key figures involved. As this research is analysing frames of France and Europe/EU, search terms depicting both France and Europe/EU were used. Articles included in the sample included a keyword for France and/or Europe/EU and a keyword for the referendum. Search terms for France and Europe/EU are: France, Français(e), République, Etat, Macron, Métropole, Europe, Euro, Européen(ne), Union Européen. Search terms for the referendum are: référendum, référendaire.

4.2.1.5 Unit of analysis

Researchers must also decide what unit of analysis best fits their research questions and hypotheses. For analysis of television news, the unit of analysis may be the news item or segment (Dekavalla 2016, p. 1595). For written news media, the unit of analysis may be the source of the information, the article, or even a title (Rowling *et al.* 2011, p.1051; Dekavalla 2016, p.799). In this research, the unit of analysis is the article. This includes the title of the article, the text of the article, and the main visual image of

⁷ In 2004, Christnacht wrote that LNC belonged to the Hersant media group. Radio is also used widely in New Caledonia as a source of news, e.g. Radio Rythme Bleu (RRB) which is politically linked to the loyalists and Radio Djiido which typically promotes a pro-independence line (Christnacht 2004, p.132)

the article (the image that is located in the main image spot, in between the title and the body of the text).

4.2.2 Analysing the sample

This research operationalised constructs from Entman's cascading activation framing theory to answer the research questions of this research. As mentioned in the theory chapter, Entman's theory argues that certain frames are more likely to "stimulate support of or opposition to the sides in a political conflict" as they are more noticeable, memorable and likely to leave a lasting impact on the reader (2003, p.417). This thesis operationalises two of Entman's constructs which "stimulate support" or "opposition": *visibility* or *centrality* and *emotive charge*. This thesis also analyses the thematic frames of France and Europe/EU.

4.2.2.1. Visibility

This thesis operationalised *centrality* in a similar manner to Chaban *et al.* (2012, p. 127). Chaban *et al.* evaluated whether the subject of their research, the EU was visible in a *major*, *secondary* or *minor* capacity in each article (2012, p. 127). Text would be coded as having major visibility, or centrality, of the EU when the EU was the dominant focus of the article. Images would be coded as having major visibility of the EU when EU actors or symbols were included in a dominant position in the main photograph (Chaban *et al.* 2014, p. 7).

For this research, when the subject under analysis (either France or Europe/EU) was the central focus of the text, the article was coded as *major*, e.g. an article focusing on Macron's visit to New Caledonia. When there were two main focuses of the article and the subject under analysis was one of them, or when the subject was merely the second most important focus of the article, the article was coded as *secondary*. Articles that only included the subject under analysis as a third or fourth focus or referenced the subject only in passing were coded as *minor*. Articles were coded as *not included* if the article didn't mention the subject under analysis, or if the article mentioned a keyword for the subject under analysis which didn't truly represent the subject under analysis, e.g. the television company called France Televisions didn't truly represent France.

In order to more thoroughly answer S-RQ1 and S-RQ2, two other indicators were used: the inclusion of a search term for France or Europe/EU in the title, and the inclusion of France and Europe/EU in the main visual image.

4.2.2.2 Emotional charge

This thesis operationalised *emotive charge* in a similar manner to Kevin (2003, p.54) and Chaban *et al.* (2017, p.487). Kevin (2003, p. 54) assessed the tone of each article, deciding whether it was *positive*, *negative* or *neutral*. Tone is not assessed based upon the nature of the news, but rather the nature of

its coverage by the writer/presenter (Kevin 2003, p. 54). Similarly, Chaban *et al.* (2017, p. 487) set out an emotional charge continuum where articles could be coded at points *negative*, *neutral-negative*, *neutral*, *neutral-positive*, *positive* and *mixed*. This nuanced six-member set of evaluations is employed in this thesis to assess the emotive framing of France and Europe/EU.

In order to answer S-RQ3 and S-RQ4, two aspects of the articles were analysed: the emotive charge of France and Europe/EU in the articles and the emotive charge of France and Europe/EU in the main visual image.

4.2.2.3 Correlation between degree of centrality and emotional charge

The theoretical literature review of this thesis discussed Entman's idea of salience and magnitude, which synthesises multiple factors influencing framing: placement, repetition and cultural resonance (1993, p.53; 2003, p.417). This suggests that analysing multiple constructs together would give an even better understanding of which frames will "stimulate support of or opposition to" a subject (Entman 2003, p.418).

This thesis agrees with this logic and proposes emotive charge and visibility of a subject in the articles are linked. Together they determine how strong the message is that the reader receives. For example, articles including France in a *minor* capacity and which are *neutral* towards France will not send a very strong or impressionable message. Alternatively, articles including France in a *major* capacity and are very *positive* or *negative* about France will likely be more memorable to the reader and thus more likely to influence their own internal framing of France.

Therefore, S-RQ1 and S-RQ3 were considered in conjunction, using a novel comprehensive analysis approach. This allows the detection of the most salient articles.

As the sample size of articles about Europe/EU was much smaller, and all of these articles were consistently of low visibility and coded as *minor*, there were no further insights to be gained by applying this approach to S-RQ2 and S-RQ4.

4.2.2.4 Thematic frames

An analysis of the thematic frames of France and Europe/EU is particularly important for understanding how the cascading activation framing model is applied in this context; one cannot know how the frames travel through the cascade if one does not know what the frames *are*.

A review of the literature of other news media analyses reveals two types of thematic frames: "issue" frames or "issue-specific" frames, such as those related to economics, politics, social affairs, and "strategic game" frames or "conflict and strategy frames" (Chaban *et al.* 2014, p.8; De Vreese *et al.* 2001, p.108; De Vreese and Semetko 2004, p.96; Lawrence 2000, quoted in Dekavalla 2016, p. 797-

798). In an election or referendum context, issue frames are frames discussing policy problems, proposed solutions to problems, and how this implicates the public (Lawrence 2000, quoted in Dekavalla 2016, p. 798). Strategic game frames depict a competition or a strategic game between opponents e.g. which campaign is 'winning' (Dekavalla 2016, p. 798).

Dekavalla's (2016, p. 800) study of the Scottish independence referendum found the strategic game frame to be the most prominent frame in news coverage, making up 53% of the total coverage. As this thesis, unlike Dekavalla's research (2016) is not assessing the framing of the entire referendum, but rather the framing of the subjects of France and Europe/EU within the referendum context, such a high proportion of strategic game frames was not expected to be observed.

Given this and due to the uniqueness of this research, thematic frames were only identified after a pilot trial and significant immersion in the sample. The frames of France identified are the following:

1. France as an influencer
2. France as a provider
3. France as a protector
4. France as an arbiter
5. France in the Pacific
6. France as a partner
7. France as a coloniser
8. France with or without New Caledonia

A single article could be coded as including several thematic frames, and some articles included none of these key thematic frames at all.

Due to the limited discussion of Europe/EU in the context of the referendum, specific frames of Europe/EU were not identified and so the quantity of these frames present was not analysed. Europe/EU was often framed as a protector of New Caledonia and other Pacific Island countries. In this context, the EU was presented as a development actor. European citizenship and a European passport were presented as desirable to have, and Europe/EU was also discussed in economic terms. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2.2.5 Thematic frames included in most salient articles

As stated above in 4.2.2.3, the most salient articles can be detected by observing which articles were coded as including the subject in a *major* capacity and in a very emotive way (*positive*, *negative* or *mixed*). This thesis examined the correlation between the degree of centrality, emotive charge and thematic frames included in the article in order to determine which thematic frames were included in the most salient articles.

4.2.3 Summary of applied research methods

The table below summarises the process used in this research to collect the data sample.

Figure 4.2: Summary of data collection methods

Range of content	News media content
New media type and sources	Written media only: <i>Les Nouvelles Caledoniennes</i> and <i>La1ère</i>
Period of analysis	19 th March 2018 – 3 rd November 2018
Search terms	One of the following: <i>France, Français(e), République, Etat, Macron, Métropole, Europe, Euro, Européen(ne), Union Européen</i> , AND one of the following: <i>référendum, référendaire</i> .
Unit of analysis	The article (includes the title, main image, and body of the text)

Source: Author's own

The table below summarises the coding categories and their constituent notions used in the analysis of articles. This extensive analysis framework allows for this research to answer RQ1: *How did media frames of France and Europe/EU contribute to discussion on the future of New Caledonia in the context of the referendum.*

Figure 4.2: Summary of content analysis methods

Construct	Indicators	Codes
S-RQ1: How visible is France in the context of the referendum in news media articles?		
Visibility	Centrality of France in the text of the article	Coding categories: <i>Major, secondary, minor, not included</i>
	Inclusion of France in the title of the article	Coding categories: <i>Included, not included</i>
	Inclusion of symbols or figures representing France in the main visual image	Coding categories: <i>Included, not included</i>
S-RQ2: How visible is Europe/EU in the context of the referendum in news media articles?		
Visibility	Centrality of Europe/EU in the text of the article	Coding categories: <i>Major, secondary, minor, not included</i>
	Inclusion of Europe/EU in the title of the article	Coding categories: <i>Included, not included</i>
	Inclusion of symbols or figures representing Europe/EU in the main visual image	Coding categories: <i>Included, not included</i>
S-RQ3: How is France presented emotively by the media in the context of the referendum?		
Emotive charge	Emotive charge of France in the text	Coding categories: <i>Positive, neutral-positive, neutral, neutral-negative, negative, mixed, not included</i>
	Emotive charge of France in the main visual image	Coding categories: <i>Positive, neutral-positive, neutral, neutral-negative, negative, mixed, not included</i>
S-RQ4: How is Europe/EU presented emotively by the media in the context of the referendum?		
Emotive charge	Emotive charge of Europe/EU in the text	Coding categories: <i>Positive, neutral-positive, neutral, neutral-negative, negative, mixed, not included</i>
	Emotive charge of Europe/EU in the main visual image	Coding categories: <i>Positive, neutral-positive, neutral, neutral-negative, negative, mixed, not included</i>
S-RQ5: What image of France is presented by the media in the context of the referendum?		
Thematic frames	Thematic frames of France in the text	Coding categories: <i>France as an influencer, France as a provider, France as a protector, France as an arbiter, France in the Pacific, France as a partner, France as a coloniser, France with or without New Caledonia</i>
S-RQ6: What image of Europe/EU is presented by the media in the context of the referendum?		
Thematic frames	Thematic frames of Europe/EU in the text	No specific coding categories, thematic frames of Europe/EU determined inductively

Source: Author's own

4.3. Semi-structured interviews

4.3.1 Advantages and disadvantages

This research chose to conduct interviews with New Caledonian journalists. This research chose semi-structured interviews as the interview style. Semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility than regular interviews, as they involve having a set of guiding questions, rather than a rigid set of questions which must be asked identically to each participant (Wilson 2012, p.96). The interviewer is also able to ask probing questions to encourage the interviewee to elaborate on their answer or provide further information (May 2001, p.123; Gill *et al.* 2008, p.291).

Interviews, in general, are a useful data collection technique when one is wanting to explore the views, experiences and behaviours of individuals in certain situations (Gill *et al.* 2008, p.292). As this study is interested in media framing and the frame production process, this study understands that journalists have an important role in filtering frames and determining which frames are present in a media article. Therefore, qualitative interviews are pertinent to this research as they provide an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of journalists' behaviour and their relationships with other actors as a part of the frame production process.

One of the risks of interviews is that the interviewer might bias the data by asking leading questions. Leading questions are questions in which the interviewer implicitly or explicitly suggests what the answer should be (McMurray *et al.* 2004, p.199). While this remains a disadvantage of interviews, this can be mitigated by careful construction of the interview questions.

There is also a risk that the interviewees may bias the data by lying, exaggerating, omitting information and/or selectively recalling information. This can occur inadvertently; interviews reflect a person's memory and understanding of experiences, rather than an accurate depiction of the real truth of those experiences (May 2001, p.144). However, as journalists are the actors most directly involved in the processes of frame production, interviews with journalists remain the best way for a researcher to gain as accurate as possible an understanding of the frame production process.

4.3.2 Interview questions

This research designed an interview questionnaire specifically for interviews with New Caledonian journalists (see Appendix 2). This questionnaire included questions on news media policy, news selection and influencing factors. These questions were approved by the UC Ethics committee on 21st August (Ref: HEC 2018/51/LR). The interviews were recorded on a cell-phone recording device. Interviewees were asked for their consent for the interviews to be recorded and they were asked

how they wanted to be credited for their responses i.e. anonymous, by newspaper only or full accreditation.

4.3.3 Participant selection

Participants were selected to represent the two media sources comprising the first data set.

Journalists and directors from LNC and *La1ère* were contacted via email and approached in person to schedule interviews. The opportunity for the interview with the journalist from *La Voix de Kanaky* arose after the researcher met the journalist at a public event on the 24th September 2018.

The interview with the journalist from *La Voix de Kanaky* took place in the offices of the Congress of New Caledonia at 11:30 am on the 25th September. The interview with Gonzague de la Bourdonnaye from *La1ère* took place in the offices of *La1ère* at 10:30 am on the 27th September. The interview with Gilles Caprais from LNC took place in *Le Best Café* at 1 pm on the 30th September.

4.3.4 Analysis of interviews

The researcher analysed the interviews chronologically by moving through the transcripts.

Statements were coded when they a) described the role and/or function of the media in New Caledonia b) described *l'État* or the interaction between the media and *l'État* c) described local politicians or the interaction between the media and local politicians d) described the public or the interaction between the media and the public e) described the role and/or function of social media or the interaction between the media and social media f) described values held by the journalists such as neutrality.

4.4 Summary

This research uses a mixed methods approach to answer the two overarching and six sub-research questions. The content analysis allows for a quantitative approach due to the large sample size (310 articles) and the selection of concrete indicators and coding categories i.e. *major*, *secondary* and *minor*. The article content analysis and the interview analysis both allow for a qualitative approach which focusses on interpreting the content and images of the media articles and the content of the interviews. While this research primarily follows a deductive approach, starting with Entman's cascading activation framing theory and applying it to the New Caledonian context, there are also inductive aspects of the methods applied for this research. This can be seen in the way that thematic frames of France in the article analysis were only identified after a pilot trial and significant immersion in the sample.

5. Empirical Analysis

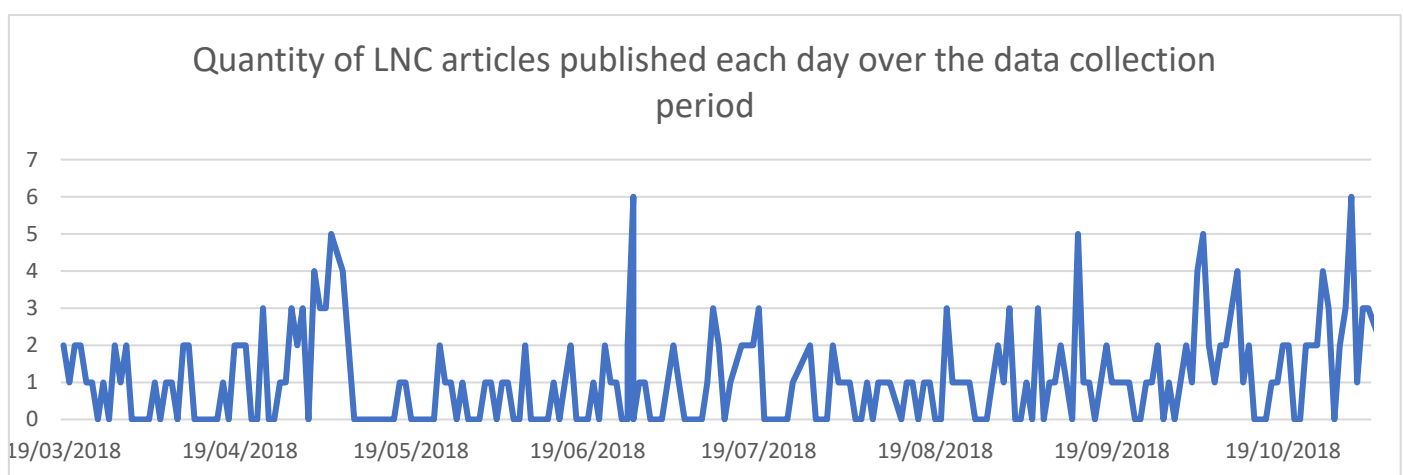
5.1. Overview

5.1.1. Volume of coverage

From the 19th March until the 3rd April (inclusive), LNC published 238 articles and *La1ère* published 72 articles meeting the keyword requirements. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the quantity of articles published daily over the data collection period. Publishing was relatively regular although there were some peaks and dips. The busiest periods were early May, when Macron visited New Caledonia, and in the weeks immediately preceding the referendum.

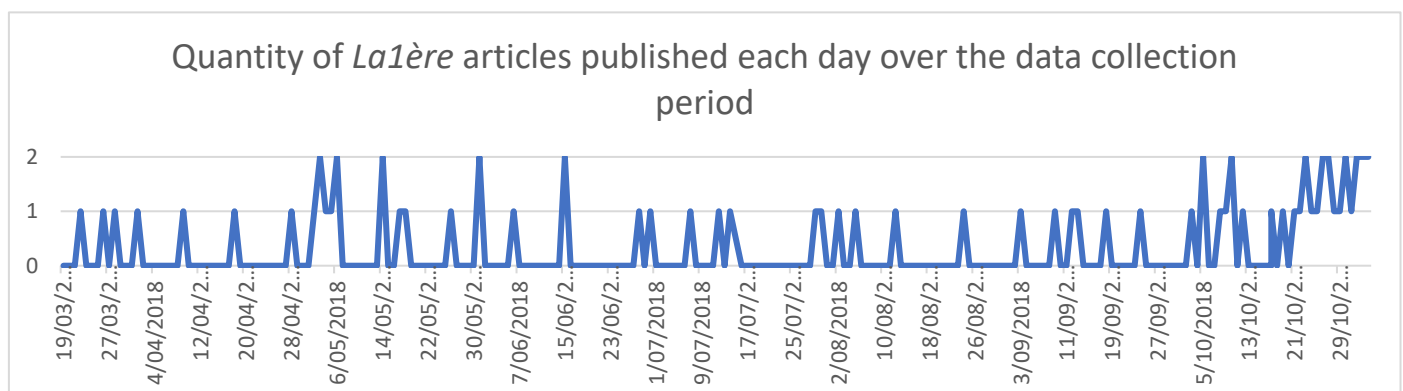
Six LNC articles were published on the 27th June, causing an observable spike. Three of these articles were sourced from international publishers and appear to be a part of a mini-series examining the history of New Caledonia (Minard 2018a, Minard 2018b, Minard 2018c).

Figure 5.1:



Source: Author's own

Figure 5.2:



Source: Author's own

5.1.2. Volume of visual images

209 LNC articles included a main visual image. 50 (21.2%) LNC articles included a symbol or figure representing France and 6 (2.52%) LNC articles included a symbol representing Europe/EU. 69 *La1ère* articles included a main visual image. 14 (19.44%) *La1ère* articles included a symbol or figure representing France and five (6.94%) *La1ère* articles included a symbol representing Europe/EU. Images representing France typically included Macron or the French flag. Images representing Europe/EU typically included the EU flag.

5.2. Visibility

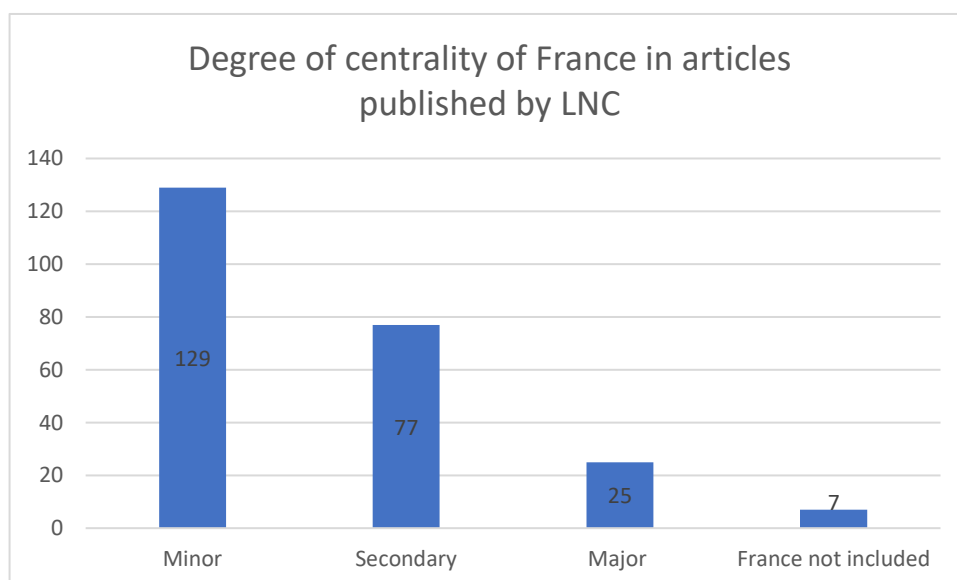
5.2.1. Visibility of France in the articles

5.2.1.1. Degree of Centrality of France in the articles

Figures 5.3 and 5.4 show it was most common for articles to include France in a *minor* capacity. Although LNC published more *minor* articles in total, *La1ère* published more *minor* articles proportionally; 70.84% of *La1ère* (51 articles) were *minor* and 54.2% of LNC articles (129 articles) were *minor*. LNC published a greater proportion of articles coded as *secondary*; 32.35% of LNC articles (77) were coded as *secondary* and 16.67% of *La1ère* articles (12) were coded as *secondary*.

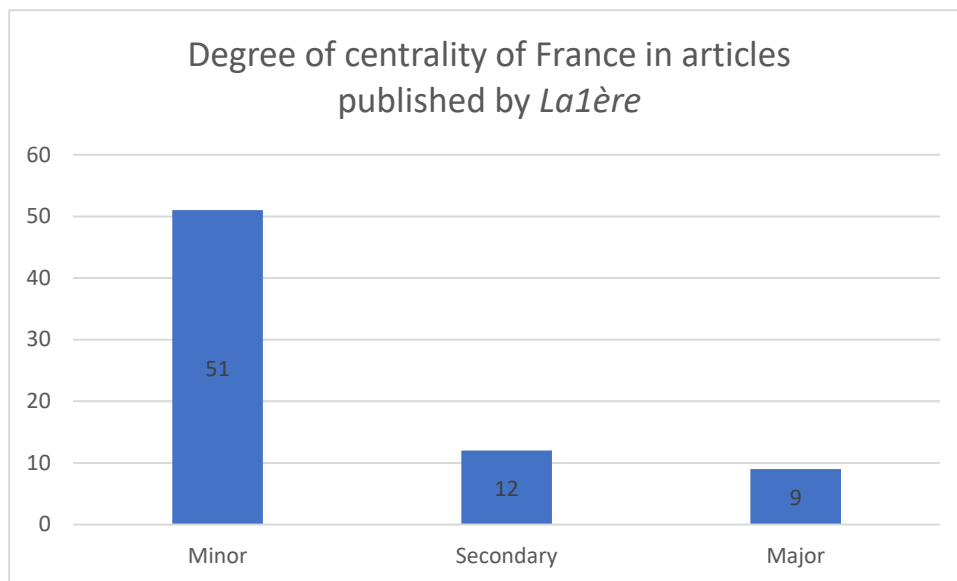
While there are some variations between the two media sources, France tended to be included in the articles in a *minor* capacity, and very rarely in a *major* capacity.

Figure 5.3:



Source: Author's own

Figure 5.4:

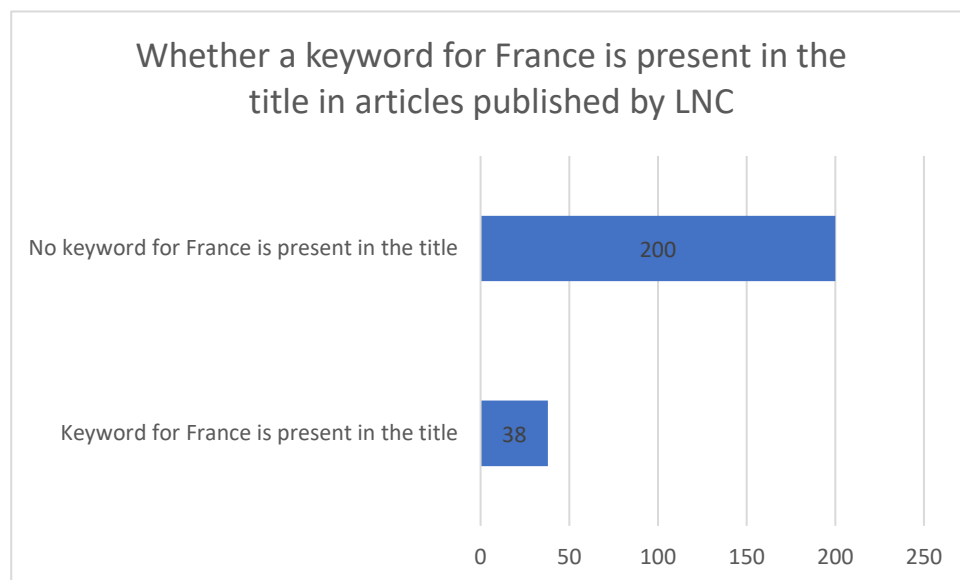


Source: Author's own

5.2.1.2. Inclusion of France in the titles

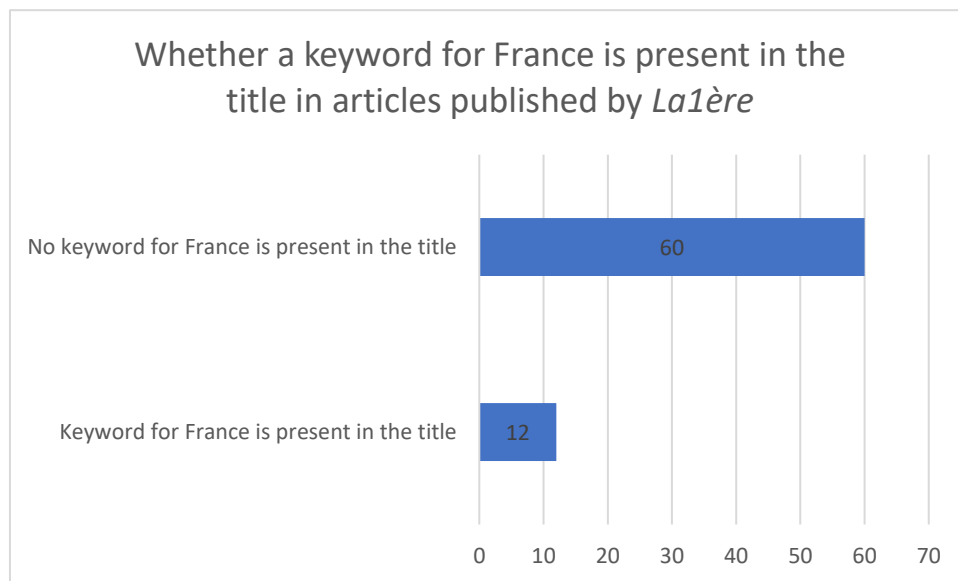
Figures 5.5 and 5.6 show a keyword for France was rarely present in the title. A keyword for France was included in 38 (15.97%) LNC articles and in 12 (16.67%) *La1ère* articles.

Figure 5.5:



Source: Author's own

Figure 5.6:



Source: Author's own

5.2.2. Visibility of Europe/EU in the articles

32 LNC articles (13.45%) and five *La1ère* articles (6.94%) included search terms for Europe/EU. All were coded as *minor*, except for two *La1ère* articles which were excluded as the search terms for Europe/EU were not actually representing Europe/EU (these articles referenced the European ethnic group living in New Caledonia). Therefore, only three *La1ère* articles (4.17%) were coded as minor.

Other indicators of visibility similarly showed a low visibility of Europe/EU; there were never any keywords for Europe/EU included in the titles of LNC and *La1ère* articles and only six (2.52%) LNC articles and five (6.94%) *La1ère* articles had a main visual image representing Europe/EU.

5.3 Emotive framing

5.3.1. Emotive charge of France

5.3.1.1. Emotive charge of France in the articles

Figures 5.7 and 5.8 show the emotive charge of France in the articles.

Figure 5.7:

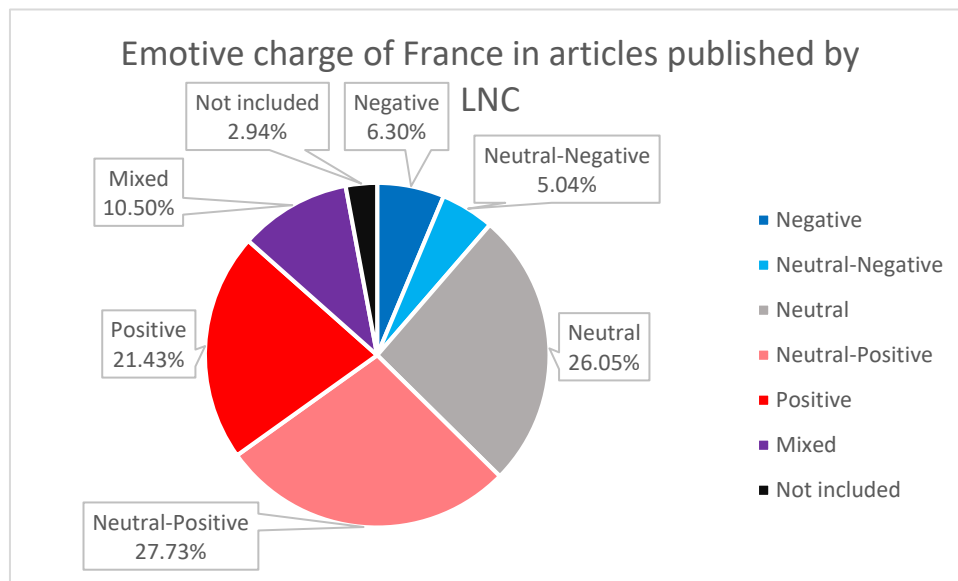
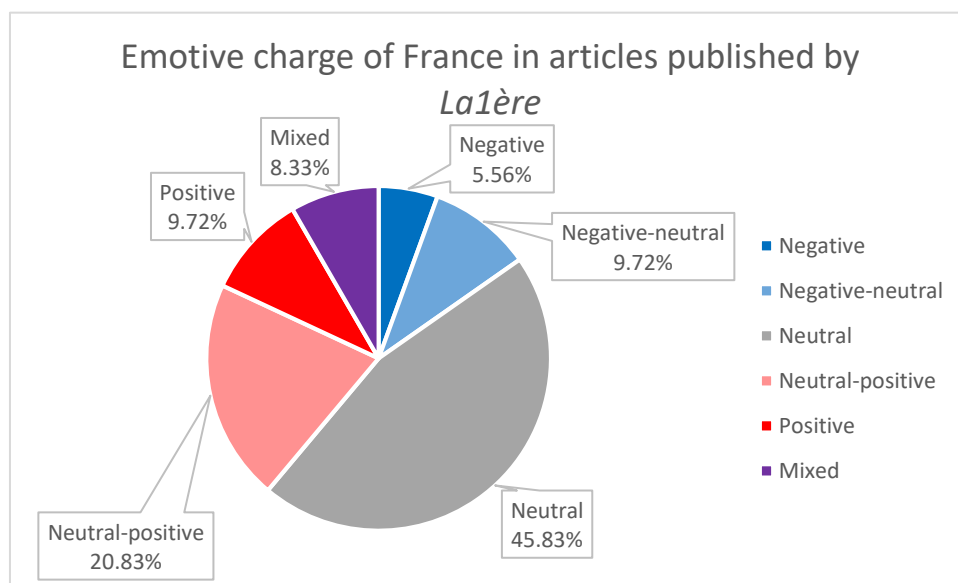


Figure 5.8:



Comparing the two news outlets, LNC published more *positive* articles than *La1ère* (respectively, 21.43% and 9.72%) and *La1ère* published more *neutral* articles than LNC (respectively, 45.83% and 26.05%). When all articles coded as *neutral*, *neutral-positive* and *positive* are combined, LNC and *La1ère* published similar amounts (respectively, 78.21% and 76.38%). Similarly, when articles coded as *neutral-negative*, *negative* and *mixed* are combined, LNC and *La1ère* published similar amounts (21.84% and 23.71%). This shows that while there is some variation between the two outlets within

these emotive blocs (*neutral-to-positive* vs. *neutral-negative*, *negative* and *mixed*), LNC and *La1ère* were generally consistent in their emotive framing.

This research observed that there are three components of the article which contribute to the emotive framing: a) the content of the article, b) the actors quoted and given a platform within the article and c) the journalistic style, commentary and speculation within the article.

5.3.1.1.1. *Content of the article*

The content of the article influenced the emotiveness of the article. This was observed from the emotively *neutral* articles published by *La1ère*. Many of the *La1ère* articles focussed on administrative issues, such as the electoral list of who could vote. For example, in the November 1 *La1ère* article “J-3: programme of Edouard Philippe’s visit, formation of the delegates, questions to come [Campaign day #11]”, the journalist writes, “During the night, Matignon published the programme of Edouard Philippe’s visit to New Caledonia on Sunday, the day after the referendum” (*La1ère* 2018a).⁸ Content, such as this that was less controversial or less likely to include controversial or emotive quotes by political actors, tended to be coded as *neutral*.

5.3.1.1.2. *Actors quoted and given a platform within the article*

While journalists do not get to determine the words said by the actors they interview, they do have control over who they interview and which phrases and sentences they published as quotes. The use of quotes played an important role in determining the emotive charge of articles.

Quotes had the potential to influence the emotive charge of the article when the journalist heavily relied on quotes to tell the story. The May 5 *La1ère* article “Emmanuel Macron: ‘France would not be the same without New Caledonia’” reproduces much of Macron’s concluding speech in New Caledonia in quote-form throughout the article (Riahi and Jeaneau, 2018a). As there are many quotes and passages from Macron, most of which cast France in a positive light, his view becomes the dominant one in the article. For example, Macron says “The State will do everything to make the result incontestable”. This is arguing an important issue in New Caledonian politics, that the State-organised referendum will be fair and that the results will be respected. Macron is framing France positively by arguing that *l’État* is doing its job and to a high standard. This influenced the overall coding of this article as *positive*.

This was similarly true of *negative* articles, when the voice and tone of the actors in the article was integrated into the journalists’ telling of the news. The first paragraph of the July 14 *La1ère* article

⁸ All translations of article titles in this thesis are the researcher’s own.

“The *Parti Travailliste* will not participate in a referendum that only has self-determination in the name” integrates quotes from the party conference seamlessly into the journalist’s writing:

We will not participate in the referendum of November 4." This is what the *Parti Travailliste* decided on Saturday, when their activists gathered to debate this subject. Activists came with a questionnaire. Among the points raised was whether the referendum will really be a referendum. "No," responds the *Parti Travailliste*. Are the conditions of sincerity, respect and justice met? "No," says the PT. Another question: have the successive agreements allowed the Kanak people to be recognized in their own country? No, again responds the *Parti Travailliste*. (Tromeur 2018)

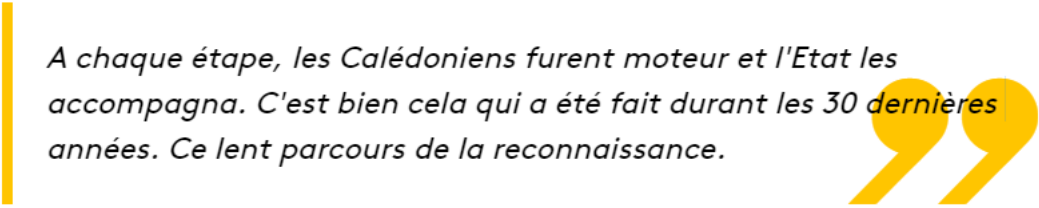
Here, the journalist’s telling of the news relies heavily on quotes, but also on the narrative and framing supplied by the PT. After just the first paragraph, it appears that *La1ère* agrees with the PT that the referendum is not fair and that previous agreements have failed the Kanak people. Although this particular paragraph does not reference France explicitly, it still contributes to the article’s emotive tone towards France; later in the article, links are made that connect the anger of the PT to their blaming of France: “For us, it is a State plan to take the Kanak people down a dead end”.

Furthermore, a journalist’s strategic placement of quotes often emphasized the emotion presented in the quote, enabling it to have a greater influence on the overall tone of the article. For example, in the May 5 *La1ère* article, Macron is quoted:

“At each stage, Caledonians were the driving force and the State accompanied them. This is what has been done in the last 30 years. This slow course of recognition.” (Riahi and Jeaneau 2018a)

This is a positive comment about the State as it shows that the State did not take over in a colonial way but allowed New Caledonians to set the course for their future, recognising their legitimacy to do so. The journalists’ decision to emphasize this quote (Figure 5.9) gives extra weight to the positive sentiment carried in it.

Figure 5.9: Text from May 5 *La1ère* article by Riahi and Jeaneau



A chaque étape, les Calédoniens furent moteur et l'Etat les accompagna. C'est bien cela qui a été fait durant les 30 dernières années. Ce lent parcours de la reconnaissance.

Source: Riahi and Jeaneau 2018a

Similarly, in *negative* articles, extensive weight and platform was given to the voice of critical actors. The 27th June LNC article ““Many of us thought that we would come home with independence””

(Mainguet 2018a), includes the transcript of an interview with Caroline Machoro of the UC. As such, her voice is the sole voice in the article and so her negative tone towards France becomes the tone of the article.

The way in which opinions were attributed also influenced the emotive charge of the article. For example, articles which clearly attributed opinions to political actors were more likely to be coded as *neutral* because it was obvious that any opinion or emotion expressed by the actor was not that of the media source. In the June 28 *La1ère* article “Before the dialogue group, the Prime Minister met with elected officials”, the journalist writes, “the Prime Minister recalled, as he has already done in the National Assembly, the overriding need, *according to him*, to maintain the threads of dialogue to preserve peace beyond 4 November” (Souche 2018, italics added). This clearly shows that this is the perspective of the Prime Minister and not *La1ère*.

Similarly, articles were more likely to be neutral if they limited the platform given to other actors and included fewer quotes. *La1ère* articles often maintained neutrality by limiting the voice of actors in the articles: politicians’ ability to dominate the mood and tone of the article was reduced as they rarely had several quotes in one article and thus weren’t given the platform to control the emotive framing. For example, in the June 28 article mentioned above (Souche 2018), the quote presented is the only time the Prime Minister’s voice is heard in the article.

5.3.1.1.3. Journalistic style, commentary and speculation within the article

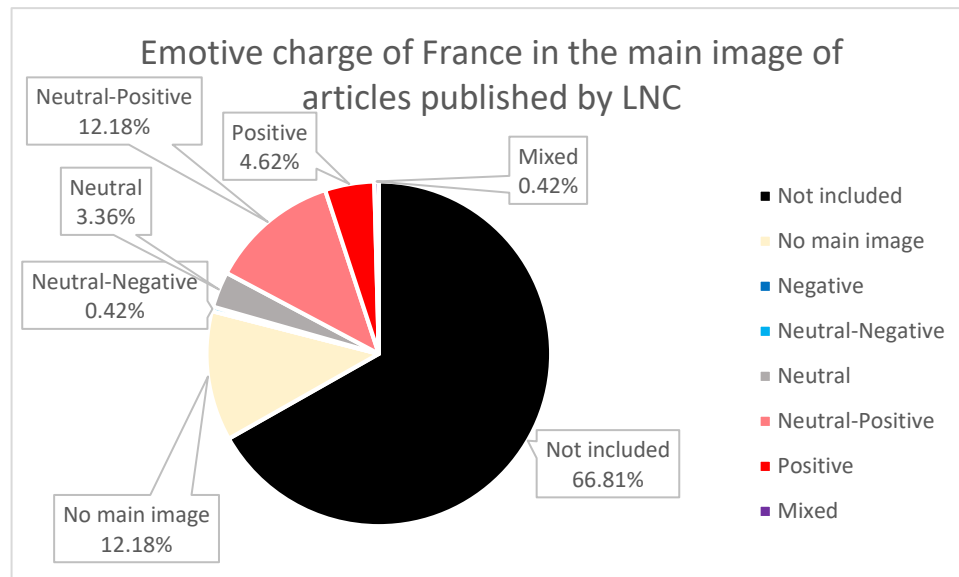
The most explicit way for journalists to influence the emotive charge of the article was to include their own commentary or speculation. One of the reasons the May 5 *La1ère* article (Riahi and Jeauneau 2018a) was coded as *positive* was because of the contributions of the journalists in the commentary sections of the article. Following on from a quote by Macron about the future, the journalists wrote: “An economic future related to nickel, tourism, the sea, training of youth, but also of equality between men and women, a future incarnated by this meeting with Ginette, a young woman from Ouvéa, with whom the head of state planted a coconut tree this Saturday, May 5.” By describing a positive future for New Caledonia, and then ending the sentence by describing a symbolic moment shared between Macron and a young New Caledonian it appears that this positive future will only exist if shared by the *l'État* and New Caledonia. While this is a subtle form of commentary it did influence the overall tone of the article.

5.3.1.2. Emotive charge of France in the main visual image

29 LNC articles included a main visual image that was *neutral-positive* of France (see Figures 5.10 and 5.11). While this is only 12.18% of the total 238 LNC articles, it constitutes a majority of the 50 articles which included a main visual image representing France. Six of the 14 *La1ère* main visual images

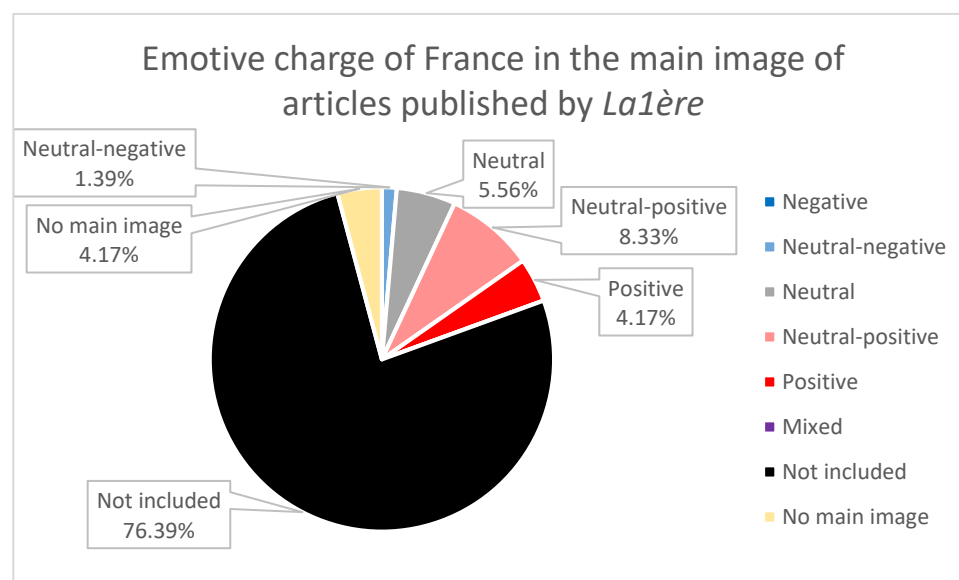
including France were coded as *neutral-positive*. These six articles with *neutral-positive* main visual images only represent 8.39% of the total 72 *La1ère* articles. Therefore, when a main visual image *does* show France, it tends to be in a *neutral-positive* way.

Figure 5.10:



Source: Author's own

Figure 5.11:



Source: Author's own

The following collage (Figure 5.12) shows examples of *positive* images. These images tend to include Macron in the centre of the frame surrounded by other actors who were smiling or otherwise appearing approving of Macron and his actions. *Positive* articles breaking this trend were still coded as *positive* because they depicted strong support for France through the French flag and its colours.

Figure 5.12: *Positive images*



Source: Author's own

The following collage (Figure 5.13) shows *neutral-positive* images published. The key difference between these and *positive* is that there tends to be less of a direct focus on Macron when he is included in the articles, e.g. he is standing behind others or the frame is zoomed-out so. For *neutral-positive* images not including Macron, the key difference is that *neutral-positive* images generally tend to include less smiling by other actors, or it is less obvious that any general displays of positive emotions in the images are connected to the inclusion of the French colours.

Figure 5.13: *Neutral-positive* images



Source: Author's own

Very few articles contained a *neutral* image of France. Typical *neutral* images included the French flag and/or colours in political party logos that were a small or partially hidden part of the overall image. One outlier is an image of the Congress building lit-up in the colours of the French flag at night (Figure 5.14). This image was coded as *neutral* because, although the article was telling the story of the controversial decision to light up the Congress building, the image itself does not carry this sense of controversy. This main visual image is also rather abstract, and its emotiveness is heavily dependent on how it is interpreted; it could be seen as a symbol for France lighting up the dark, or it could be

seen as the dark entirely encompassing this symbol for France. As such, the image was coded as *neutral*.

Figure 5.14: *Neutral* image



Source: Author's own

Only two images depicted France in a *neutral-negative* way. This was the main image of the May 2 LNC article "A collective doesn't want Macron to come to Wadrilla" (Mainguet 2018b), see Figure 5.15, and the main image of the May 2 *La1ère* article "Gossanah: 'No to Macron coming to the grave of the 19'" (N.G. 2018), see Figure 5.16. These images include France through the writing of "MACRON" on the signs. Although the rest of the text is barely readable, the body language of the group in the image makes it clear that Macron is not considered positively.

Figure 5.15: Neutral-negative LNC image



Source: Author's own

Figure 5.16: Neutral-negative La1ère image

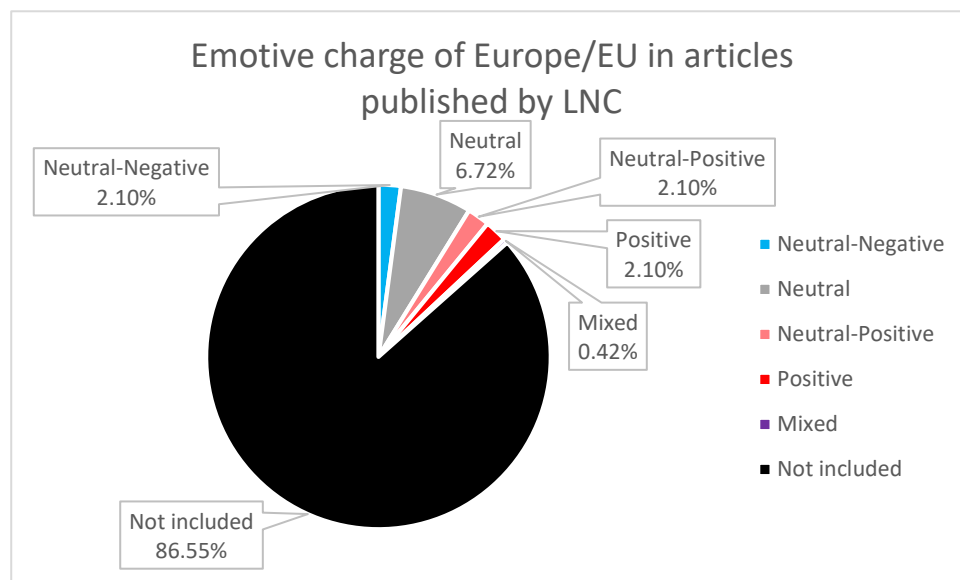


Source: Author's own

5.3.2. Emotive charge of Europe/EU

32 LNC articles and three *La1ère* articles met the keyword criteria for Europe/EU. Figure 5.17 shows the breakdown of the emotive charge of the LNC articles. Of the three *La1ère*, two were *neutral* and one was *neutral-positive*.

Figure 5.17:



Source: Author's own

As can be seen in Figure 5.17 and in the details provided about the *La1ère* articles, articles which included Europe/EU tended to do so by discussing Europe/EU on the *neutral-to-positive* side of the emotive spectrum. This trend is also observed in the emotive charge of main visual images. All main visual images including a symbol representing Europe/EU were coded as *neutral-positive*. The middle-right and bottom-right images included in Figure 5.13 are examples of images that were coded as *neutral-positive* of Europe/EU.

These observations from the articles and main visual images suggest that news media in New Caledonia ranges from being fairly ambivalent to positive when reporting on Europe/EU.

5.3.3. Correlation between the visibility and emotive charge of France

Figures 5.18 and 5.19 show the correlation between visibility and emotiveness of France in the articles on a timeline. When there are multiple bubbles spread out vertically along the graph, this shows that multiple articles were published in one day. The size of the bubble corresponds with the degree of centrality i.e. the largest bubbles represent a *major* article.

Figure 5.18:

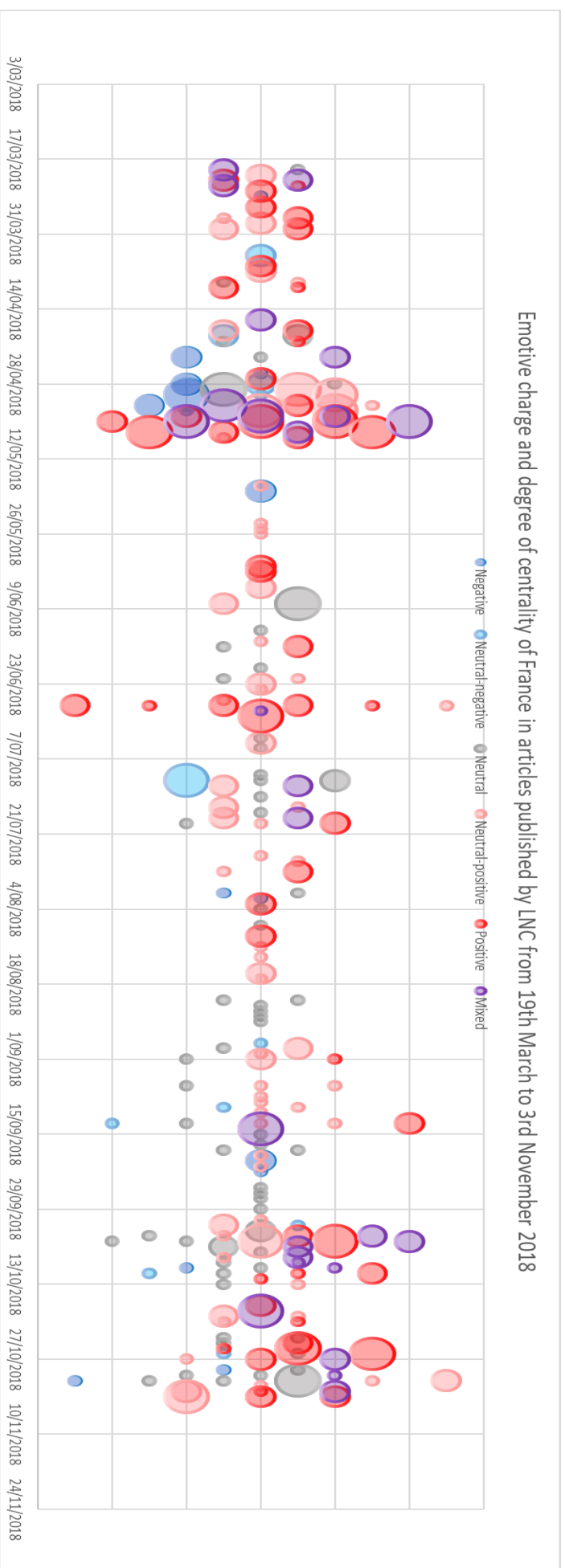
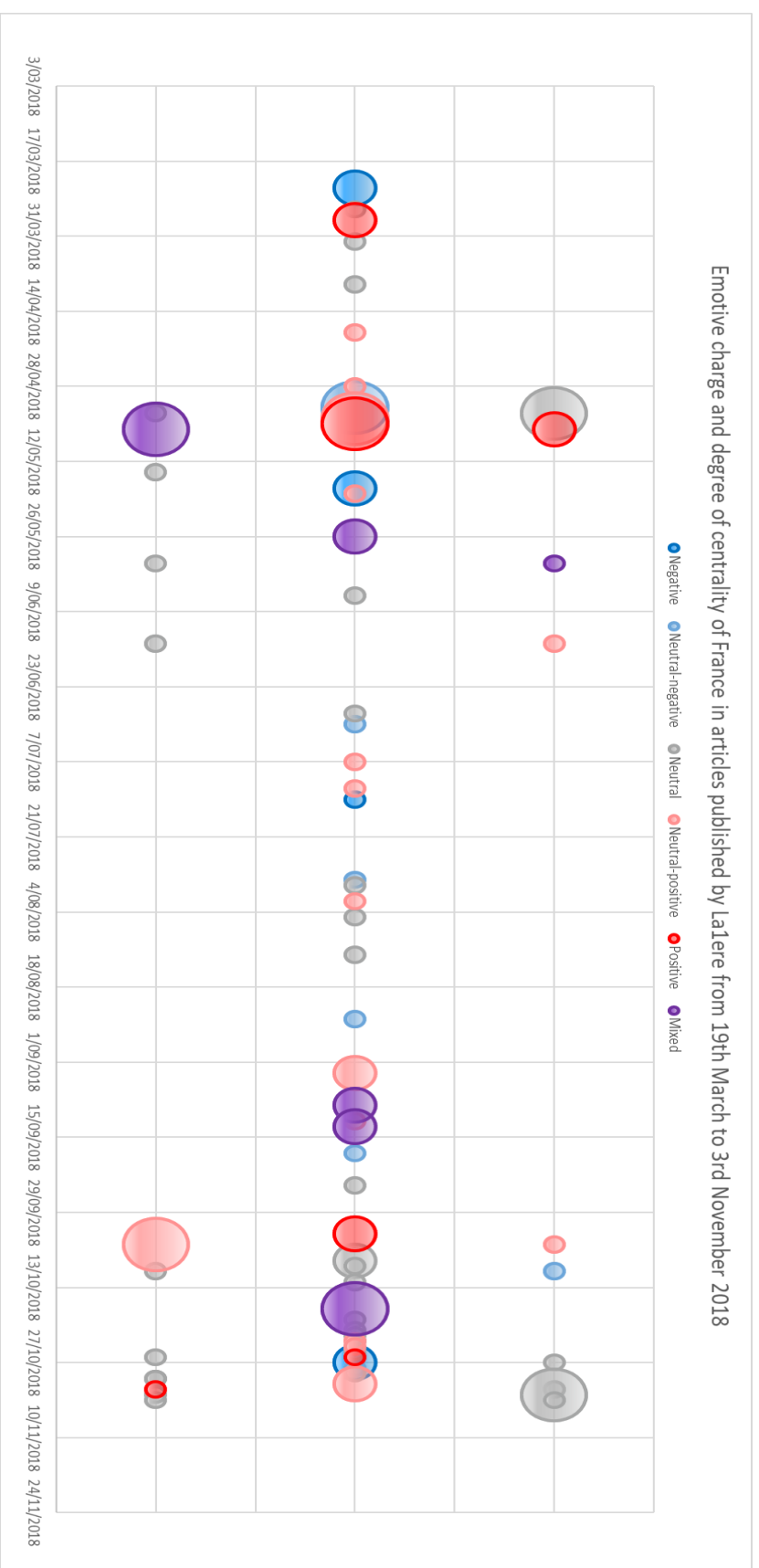


Figure 5.19:



Figures 5.18 and 5.19 reveal that a lot of articles that were both *major* and *positive* or *mixed* were published in early May, around the time of Macron's visit to New Caledonia. There is also a significant cluster of *secondary* and *major* articles from early October onwards which tend to be *positive* or *mixed*. *Neutral* or *neutral-positive* articles were published throughout the data collection period, however these articles tended to be less visible.

By investigating S-RQ1 and S-RQ3 together in a comprehensive manner, this research gains an extra layer of sophistication. Although a majority of the articles published throughout the entire collection period show France in a *minor* capacity, and although a significant proportion of the articles were *neutral* or *neutral-positive* towards France, Figures 5.18 and 5.19 show that, at particular key moments, France was a major focus of the reporting and was framed in a very emotive way. As these key periods correspond to important political moments in the referendum campaign, the impact of this reporting should not be underrated.

18 articles were coded as both *major* and *positive*, *negative* or *mixed*. These articles were identified as being the most salient articles. Of these, one was *negative*, nine were *positive* and eight were *mixed*. As *mixed* articles include both positive and negative elements, this shows that 17 of the most salient articles included positive elements and nine of the most salient articles included negative elements.

There are proportionally more *mixed* articles in the most salient articles as compared to all the articles. 10.5% of all LNC articles and 8.33% of all *La1ère* articles were coded as *mixed*, but 44.44% of the most salient articles were coded as *mixed*. This suggests that the most salient articles are more likely to contain divergent viewpoints, allowing for both positive and negative framing of France to be included in the text.

5.4. Thematic framing

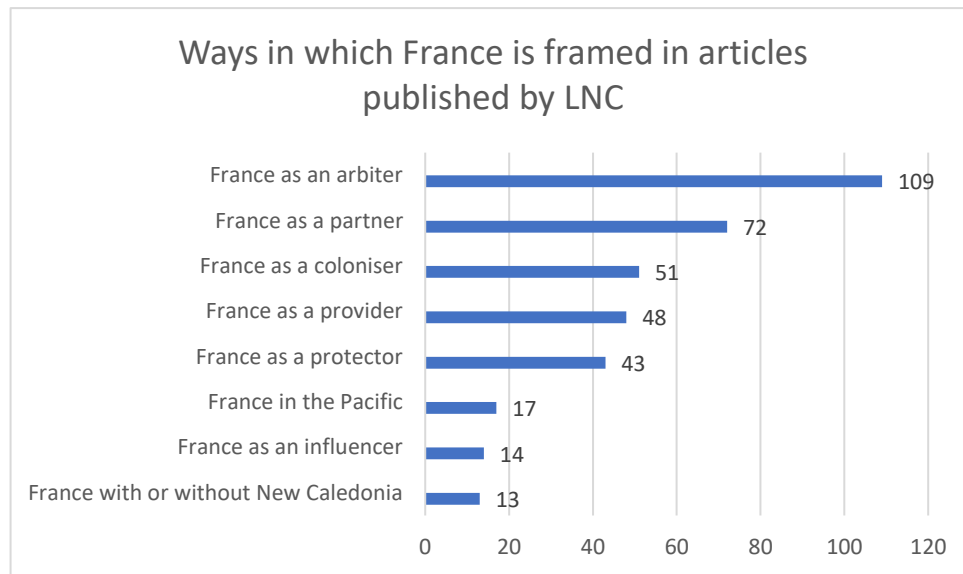
5.4.1. Thematic frames of France

In order to answer S-RQ5, the articles were analysed in terms of the following thematic frames:

1. France as an arbiter
2. France as a partner
3. France as a coloniser
4. France as a provider
5. France as a protector
6. France with or without New Caledonia
7. France in the Pacific
8. France as an influencer

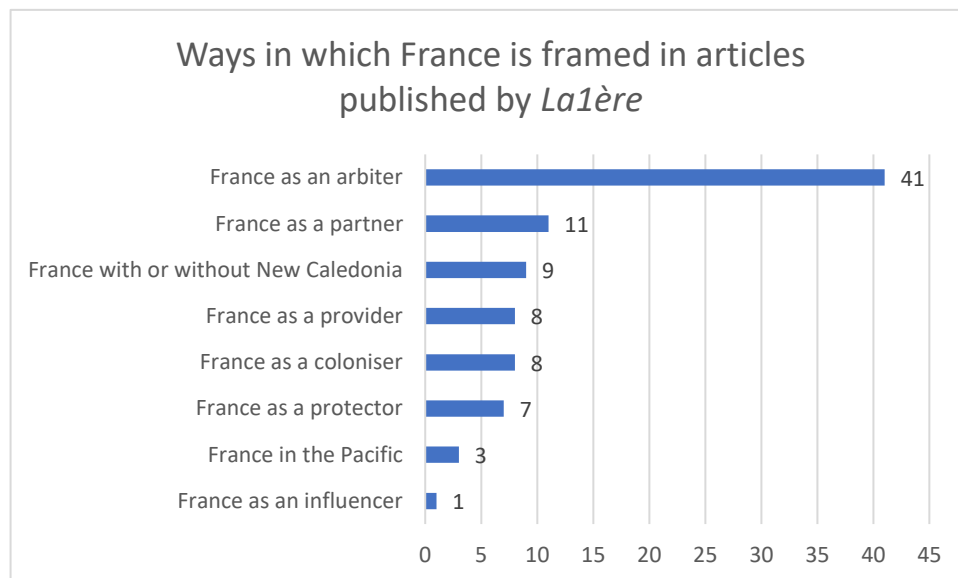
Figures 5.20 and 5.21 show how many articles were published including these thematic frames.

Figure 5.20:



Source: Author's own

Figure 5.21:

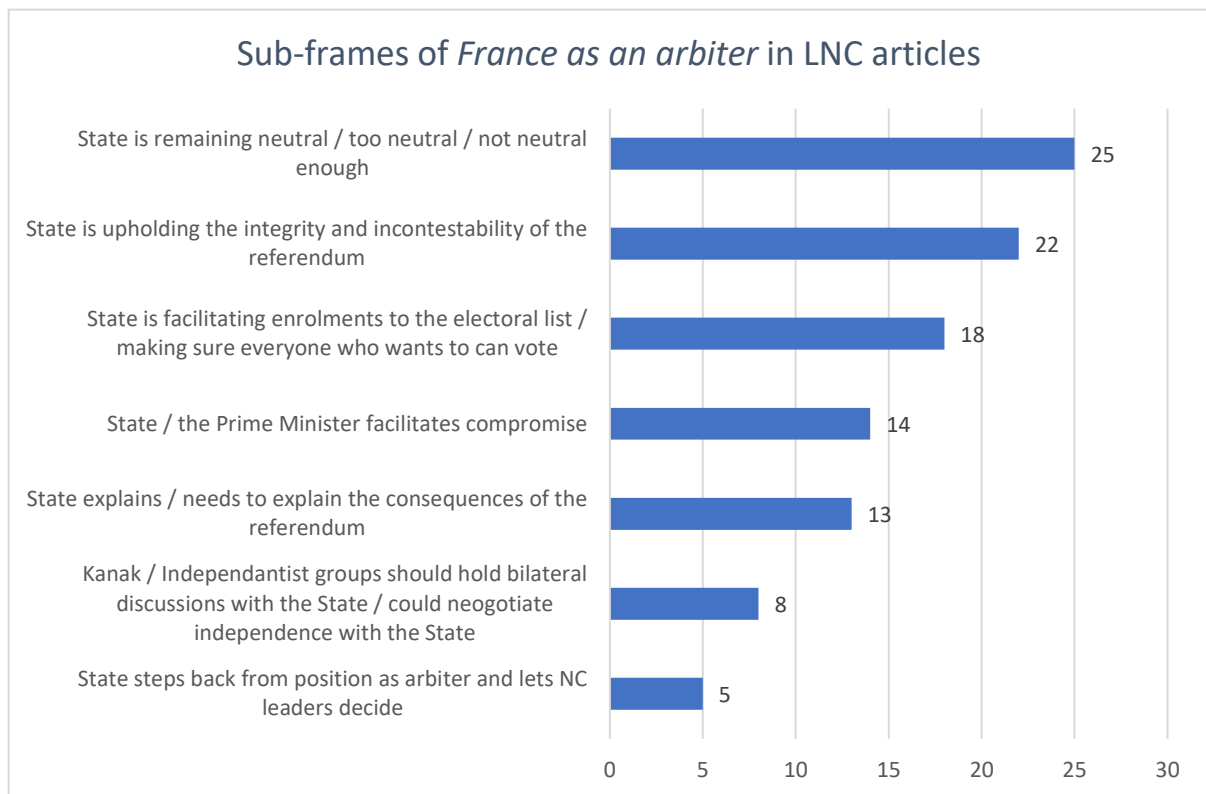


Source: Author's own

5.4.1.1. *France as an arbiter*

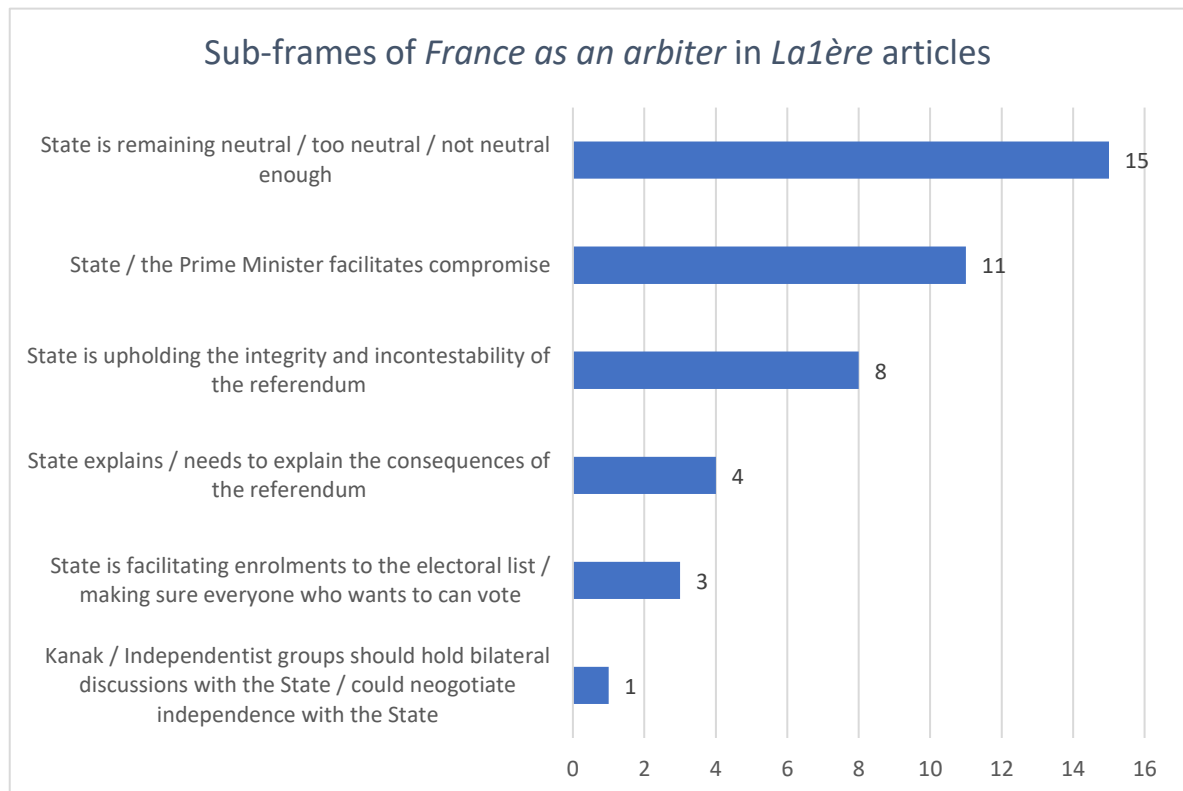
Articles coded as including *France as an arbiter* discussed France's role in organising and maintaining the integrity and validity of the referendum. *France as an arbiter* was observed in 45.8% of LNC articles (109) and 56.94% of *La1ère* articles (41). Due to the high quantity of articles including this frame, it is unsurprising that *France as an arbiter* was discussed in a variety of different contexts. Figures 5.22 and 5.23 show the frequency of the sub-frames of *France as an arbiter*.

Figure 5.22:



Source: Author's own

Source 5.23:



Source: Author's own

Some politicians were reported arguing that the *l'État* was being *too* neutral regarding the referendum. The April 10 LNC article, “We need a republican front”, includes the transcription of an interview with Gil Brial (Frédière 2018a). In the interview, Brial expresses his opinion that it is “not normal” for *l'État* to remain neutral while preparing for an independence referendum. Brial’s argument was symptomatic of many other politicians, particularly anti-independence politicians who believed that Macron, should express a preference and take a side. Similarly, Eric Ciotti, a metropolitan French politician quoted in the May 7 LNC article, “After the visit of Emmanuel Macron: reassuring, balancing and ... at fault”, argued that a neutral position implicitly favoured the independentists (LNC 2018b).

Other anti-French politicians argued that Macron and *l'État* were not being neutral *enough*. One such example can be found in the April 30 LNC article, “Returning the Prise de Possession: an “inopportune” act for *Les Républicains Calédoniens*” (2018a). This article provides a platform for a recent press release by *Les Républicains Calédoniens* (LRC), arguing that Macron’s visit to New Caledonia would be biased towards the independentists and a detriment to those who wished New Caledonia to remain French. The article also notes that LRC would like the President “to make a gesture” for all the Caledonians wishing to remain French.

At first glance these two narratives, ‘the State is too neutral’ and ‘the State is not neutral enough’, appear to be divergent and evidence of a framing contest. However, as these arguments continue to their logical conclusions, both narratives converge:

- The State is too neutral → The State needs to express a preference → the State needs to express an anti-independentist preference
- The State is not neutral enough → the State has provided gestures to the independentists but not the anti-independentists → The State should provide a gesture supporting the anti-independentists

As can be seen, both narratives argue that the State should take more action to favour the anti-independentist campaign. While there is a contest in framing of the State’s actions so far, there is no contest in framing what the State should do next. This provides an interesting example in the context of Entman’s cascading activation framing model, and it highlights how contextual intricacies such as a lively political landscape can appear to create tension between similar frames. It is also somewhat ironic that it is the *anti-indépendantistes*, or pro-French camp, that is the most critical towards the *l'État*.

To a lesser extent, the independentists also critiqued the State as not being sufficiently neutral. The September 10 LNC article, “USTKE calls for “non-participation” in the referendum” (Réné 2018),

describes how the USTKE called to boycott the referendum. Quotes from activists show their belief that the vote is already pre-set for the “no” anti-independence camp to win. Activists called it “organised electoral fraud”. While the State isn’t explicitly blamed in the article, the State’s role as organiser underlies these accusations. While this could contribute to a framing contest on whether *l’État* is a fair organiser of the referendum, the framing in this article was a one-off and the USTKE were typically regarded as extreme or fringe actors.

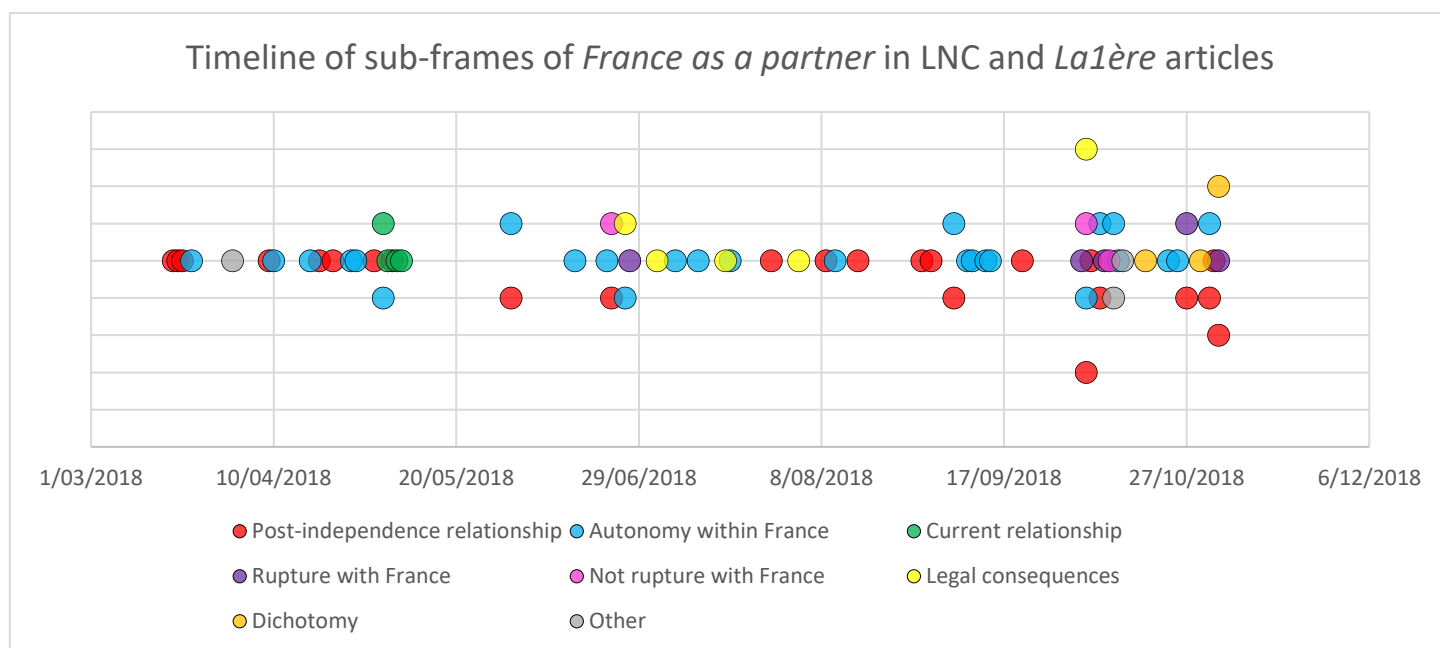
These above examples provide a snapshot of how the neutrality of France was presented in the media. A key observation from this analysis is that, while there were two clear camps in the referendum campaign, those within the camps campaigning for a “yes” vote to independence and those campaigning for a “no” vote were not homogenous. As evidenced by the two anti-independence narratives described above, political actors often differently interpreted the actions of Macron and *l’État* and this influenced their views of France as an arbiter.

5.4.1.2 *France as a partner*

This thematic frame discussed the current and possible post-referendum relationships between New Caledonia and France. 45.8% of LNC articles (72) and 15.28% of *La1ère* articles (11) included this frame. When discussion suggested that a certain type of partnership was desired, this framed France as being an entity which is desirable to have as a partner. *France as partner* also included articles presenting the idea that France is one half of a dichotomy; it is *either* France *or* independence. This dichotomy framing somewhat precludes the idea that New Caledonia could have independence and still a relationship with France.

Figure 5.24 breaks down the different ways in which France was framed as a partner and charts the date of publication of these frames on a timeline. This graph depicts how distinct sub-frames of *France as a partner* tended to occur at distinct points in time.

Figure 5.24:



Source: Author's own

Discussion of New Caledonia's possible post-independence relationship with France (red dots) and discussion of New Caledonia continuing to have autonomy within the French Republic (blue dots) occurred throughout the entire data collection period. In part, this is a simple case of narrative and counter-narrative. On the one hand, the independentists put forward the argument that the best future for New Caledonia would be to gain independence and then maintain a relationship with France as separate entities, and on the other hand the anti-independentists countered that the best future for New Caledonia was within the French Republic where greater autonomy and independence could be a possibility. As both the independentists and the anti-independentists were advocating for a future relationship with France (either as two separate entities or one entity within the other), articles containing such discussion were typically coded as *positive* or *neutral-positive* towards France.

From the narratives put forward by the independentists and anti-independentists, there developed arguments of whether a vote in favour of independence would cause France to break away quickly from New Caledonia, i.e. whether there would be a 'rupture'. As can be seen by the pink and purple dots of Figure 5.24, this argument first appeared in late June. The concern of a possible rupture with France was brought back into media discussion with the October 4 LNC article "Loyalists stand up against the FLNKS project" (Frédière 2018b). In October the FLNKS published their plan of what would happen after a "yes" vote. LNC gave a media platform to all the various anti-independentist parties who wanted to respond to this plan. In turn, LRC, *Calédonie Ensemble* (CE), and *Le Rassemblement* all critiqued the FLNKS proposal. In particular, Virginie Ruffenach of *Le Rassemblement* argued that "the

FLNKS proposes a break with France only to submit to other dependencies!” and that the FLNKS policy “would result in the departure of all living forces from the territory and that it would be a definitive break with no possible return.”

Another example of distinct frames occurring at distinct points in time is the sub-frame of the current relationship between New Caledonia and France (green dots). These articles were published during Macron’s visit to New Caledonia. As Macron aimed to stay neutral, he could not discuss in any way the future of France-New Caledonian relationships. However, he could discuss the present, and this sparked a momentary diversion from discussion of possible future relationships to discussion of the current relationship (green dots).

When discussing the current relationship, Macron described it as not one of possession but rather as “a sovereignty within sovereignty” (Frédière and Mainguet 2018a). This presented the idea that it was most important to discuss the present-day France-New Caledonia relationship. Conversely, as evidenced by the blue and red dots in Figure 5.24, the local elites preferred to discuss future possible France-New Caledonia relationships, thus emphasising that it was more important to discuss the future. Therefore, the framing contest that then occurred was not a direct framing contest (no one rebutted the idea of “sovereignty within sovereignty”) but one of importance: was it more important to discuss the present day or future France-New Caledonia relationship?

Prior to Macron’s arrival, the future of the relationship appeared most important for discussion. Immediately after landing in New Caledonia, Macron gave a press conference, in which he emphasised the current France-New Caledonia relationship and the unique “sovereignty within sovereignty”. Quotes from this press conference were published in a May 4 article (Frédière and Mainguet 2018a). From then onwards, the media almost exclusively discussed *France as a partner* in terms of the current relationship (Frédière and Mainguet 2018a). This suggests that Macron’s importance framing successfully cascaded to the media and achieved frame dominance (Entman 2003, p.418). This frame was last observed in a May 8 article (Frédière 2018f).

As outlined in Chapter 3, Entman’s cascading activation framing model is a hierarchical structure. This model assumes that Macron, as head of State, would have the most power to influence framing. Although Macron is the head of the State and was the focus of the media during this period, his framing of *France as a partner* did not endure for more than a few days. This begs the question: why did Macron’s framing fail to influence the framing of other actors and the media in the long-term? It is not unreasonable to think that Macron’s current relationships discourse *could* have fuelled local political framing in the long-term. Macron’s “a sovereignty within sovereignty” could have been used alongside the anti-independentists idea of autonomy within the republic. Equally, Macron’s point that

France is no longer possessing New Caledonia, but rather that the two are working in partnership, could have been used by the independentists to justify voting for a type of independence in partnership. As can be seen from Figure 5.24, after Macron left New Caledonia, discussion returned to future possible relationships with France.

One possibility to explain Macron's limited framing impact is that Macron's scope of discussion was significantly more limited than that of local politicians and other actors. As Macron was striving for neutrality and diplomacy, he faced constraints that these other actors did not. Consequently, he was not able to engage in debate on the most important issues i.e. the future relationship. As the other actors were able to discuss these questions more freely, it is plausible that their input was more pertinent and relevant to the debate and so held greater sway. Therefore, it appears that scope of discussion is a factor which can reduce the president's power to influence framing.

Another factor that may reduce the president's power is location, i.e. whether Macron is physically in New Caledonia. Macron's framing lost dominance after he left New Caledonia and stopped frequently giving speeches and interviews discussing New Caledonia and France. Again, this makes logical sense. Presidents are busy people with many competing priorities. If a president chooses to go to a location where a particular political issue is of prominence, they would be expected to talk about that issue. As such, their words and actions while in that location would likely be given great attention in the media. If they are not in that location and not otherwise giving special attention to that political issue, then the media would likely have little reason to focus on the president's words and actions in the context of that political issue. Therefore, other actors, such as local elites, would become the focus of the media and would have a greater platform to influence framing.

5.4.1.3. France as a coloniser

This frame was used for discussing whether France is or acts as a colonial power towards New Caledonia. France was framed as (or not as) colonial when discussion considered colonial elements to past and present policies undertaken by France in and towards New Caledonia.

This was a moderately influential frame; 21.43% of LNC articles (51) and 11.11% of *La1ère* articles (8) included discussion of France as a coloniser.

It is not entirely unsurprising that the independentist groups, as a part of their campaign, pushed for a historical narrative which emphasized France's colonial policies. Though, this was not necessarily a negative narrative; sometimes it just appeared as stating the facts. For example, the neutral identification of *France as a coloniser* can be seen in the July 28 LNC article "FLNKS on the campaign for the "yes" to independence" (Frédière 2018c). In this article, Roch Wamytan sketches the history

of New Caledonia: "Then there was the time of colonisation. For us, it was by chance that this was done by France, and then began decolonisation after the Second World War". Wamytan's phrasing suggests that it was almost inevitable that the Kanak people and their territories would be colonised, and so there is less blame, if any, placed on France specifically.

While the independentist narrative, as presented through the media, tended to emphasise France's colonial history, it was also observed that the independentists attempted to balance their critique of colonial France with their desire to promote France as a possible future partner. For example, in the March 21 LNC article, "'Careful to not re-demonise positions'" (Mainguet 2018d), which features an interview with UNI and FLNKS representative Victor Tutugoro, the LNC journalist asks Tutugoro about the possibility of "independence with partnership". Tutugoro replies that they want France "to accompany us. Not in a colonial way, but freely..."

In part, the independentists were able to reconcile France's colonial history with the prospect of future partnership due to Macron's own admissions and rejections of colonialism: "Colonisation is a part of French history. It's a crime, it's a crime against humanity", as quoted in April 28 LNC article, "The RIN want to "awaken consciences" (Cunéo 2018). Quotes such as these aligned with the independentist narrative that Macron is aware of New Caledonia's colonial history, and that he does not glorify or romanticise it and is prepared to work towards solving the lingering problems caused by colonialism.

The idea of *France as a coloniser* was also occasionally found in the anti-independentist narratives. A clear example of this can be found when Congress was deciding on the text that would accompany the legislation setting the referendum date. The journalist commented that the anti-independence parties felt the text went "too far in the description of the shadows of colonisation, and evokes very little of its lights" (Frédière and Mainguet 2018b). As can be seen by this example, the anti-independentist counter-frame did not attempt to deny that colonialism occurred, but they were typically against characterising it as a wholly negative period.

5.4.1.4. *France as a provider*

Articles that were coded as including *France as a provider* discussed the role of France in assisting, providing, and creating opportunities for New Caledonians and New Caledonia. This was a moderately important thematic frame throughout the data collection period and was included in 20.17% of LNC articles (48) and 11.11% of *La1ère* articles (8).

Positive depictions of France as a provider included France's role in enhancing development in New Caledonia, the financial transfers from the *l'État* to the New Caledonian government, and the State's investment in troubled neighbourhoods. This shows that France was typically framed as an economic

provider. France was also seen as a provider in other contexts. For example, “justice, public order, defense, money and international relations” (Frédière 2018d).

Some articles presented France as having *failed* to sufficiently provide. For example, the March 24 LNC article “For the RIN, the Nouméa Accord is ‘a fail’” (Mainguet 2018e), presents the RIN argument that France has perpetuated a colonial economic model, forcing New Caledonia to become dependent on France. In this article, the RIN argue that this dependence has reinforced social inequalities and that *l'État* has not sufficiently prioritised Kanak issues. This shows that there is a direct framing contest between France as a positive economic provider and France as a negative economic provider.

In general, France was more often presented as a positive economic provider. This was reinforced by the fact that the contesting frame of France as a negative economic provider was presented by fringe political groups such as the RIN, whereas France as a positive economic provider was presented by mainstream political groups and even by Macron himself.

5.4.1.5. *France as a protector*

Articles including *France as a protector* discussed the security of New Caledonia and the role that France plays in maintaining this. These articles included discussion of the actions France takes to protect New Caledonia, as well as France’s role and identity as a protector for New Caledonia, particularly in response to the rise of other powers in the region. This was a moderately important frame throughout the data collection period; *France as a protector* was included in 18.07% of LNC articles (43) and 9.72% of *La1ère* articles (7).

When analysing the articles, it was observed that France as a protector was present in several different contexts. One such context was the issue of security during the referendum campaign. One article even included an interview with the French High Commissioner to New Caledonia in which he details the measures being taken and how “the State will have the means to face violence” (Frédière, Gallien-Lamarche and Mainguet 2018). This presents the idea that France works hard to protect New Caledonia from internal violence and that France is committed to keeping the peace. It is likely that there is such an emphasis on security during the referendum period due to fears that violence might break out as it did during the tumultuous *événements* period. As such, it could be expected that this frame would be culturally congruent with the public and would feed into their existing schemata and internal framing of France as a security actor.

France as a protector is also considered in the context of foreign security and regional powers. The April 20 LNC article, “Faced with Chinese influence, good governance must be guaranteed” (Mainguet 2018f), features an interview with historian Jean-Marc Regnault. Regnault argues that the link with

France is important to maintain and should be kept, even if New Caledonia obtains independence. This article was published when rumours abounded of a Chinese military base in Vanuatu and direct references were made towards China as a regional power, as compared to France and Europe/EU. Regnault observes that while New Caledonia should never need a partner other than France, China may gain ground in New Caledonia as they put fewer conditions, particularly in terms of governance, on their aid. This shows that while France is framed as a protector, this role is not considered absolute and may change. This narrative of France protecting New Caledonia from China was found in other articles, particularly as the referendum drew near.

While France is generally framed positively in its role of protecting and providing security to New Caledonia, *France as a protector* is also considered in the context of high crime rates and youth delinquency. While this could be seen as a failure of *l'État*, and as such the beginnings of a framing contest, that is not the impression given by the articles which discuss this, notably in the September 13 *La1ère* article, “Laurent Wauquiez in New Caledonia: There is a page that must be turned” (Peteisi *et al.* 2018). As Wauquiez is campaigning both for New Caledonia to stay with France and for his own leadership ambitions, it appears that he is not critiquing France’s role and actions as a protector, but rather that he is critiquing aspects of the current administration.

5.4.1.6. France with or without New Caledonia

This was the sole thematic frame including articles which considered how France’s identity would be affected by the referendum. 5.46% of LNC articles (13) and 12.5% of *La1ère* articles (9) were coded as including this frame. The substance for this thematic frame stemmed almost exclusively from one single speech made by Macron when visiting New Caledonia, providing another test case for Entman’s cascading activation framing theory.

The May 5 LNC article (“Macron calls on New Caledonia to “not roll back history””) and the May 5 *La1ère* article (“Emmanuel Macron: “France would not be the same without New Caledonia””) both reported on Macron’s speech at the end of his visit to New Caledonia (AFP 2018b; Riahi and Jeaneau 2018b). Both articles included the following quote: “France would not be the same without New Caledonia”. As can be seen from the heading of the *La1ère* article, this quote quickly became a focus for the media. Macron had maintained his commitment to neutrality by not commenting on the value of France to New Caledonia, but he did offer a perspective on the value of New Caledonia to France. Later articles reported similar quotes made by Macron or versions of them repeated by other politicians i.e. “France would be less beautiful and less grand without New Caledonia” (Frédière 2018e), “France without New Caledonia would no longer exactly be France” (LNC 2018b).

The similar grammatical structures of the reiterations of this idea (would be not the same, would no longer be France, and would be less beautiful and grand) suggest that these three statements are a part of a single framing attempt. Macron is framing New Caledonia as a crucial and important part of France; it is not possessed by France, but it *is* France. This also frames the value of New Caledonia to France as being important for discussion.

5.4.1.6.1 Direct framing

As well as being quickly picked up by the media, Macron's rhetoric cascaded from Macron to the level of local politicians. Gomès' interpretation of these statements was that "Macron said things without saying them, while saying them" (Frédière 2018f). Gomès' also attempted to align Macron's framing with that of CE. This suggests that Gomès was trying to make the most of the dominant framing established by Macron for use in his anti-independence campaign. This shows that Macron's direct framing, that New Caledonia is France cascaded to the local elites and the media.

While Macron's rhetoric was challenged, his framing, that New Caledonia is France, remained dominant throughout the data collection period. In the September 9 *La1ère* article "Laurent Wauquiez: 'I believe that the common destiny of New Caledonia is in France'" (Souche *et al.* 2018), metropolitan politicians and rivals to Macron, Eric Ciotti and Wauquiez, criticised Macron's declarations as a "major fault". Although Ciotti and Wauquiez were critical of Macron's words, arguing Macron did not do enough to dissuade New Caledonians from voting to leave France, they did not negate his supposition that New Caledonia *is* presently France. This can be seen in the heading of this September 9 article (Souche *et al.* 2018). As Wauquiez is advocating for the status quo, for New Caledonians to vote to stay a part of France, this implies that he already believes New Caledonia is a part of, or simply *is*, France.

5.4.1.6.2 Importance framing

Macron's importance framing, that the value of New Caledonia to France is worthy of discussion, also cascaded to the media and to local elites. Gomès' attempts to align Macron's framing with that of CE show that Gomès believes CE voters care about the value of New Caledonia to France. In the weeks following Macron's first speech discussing the value of New Caledonia to France, any articles including this framing did not also discuss the value of France to New Caledonia. Therefore, Macron's importance framing, the value of New Caledonia to France was most important for discussion, gained dominance; there were no counter-frames suggesting that the value of France to New Caledonia was more important for discussion. It was not until June 29, long after Macron left New Caledonia, that the value of New Caledonia to France and its counter-frame, the value of France to New Caledonia, were both included in the same article (ALP 2018a). In this article, Macron was quoted stating "France would be less grand without New Caledonia" and that France also prioritised creating jobs and

economic activity in its overseas territories (ALP 2018a). Therefore, by June 29, both the value of France to New Caledonia and its counter-frame were considered important for discussion; there was frame parity between the two importance frames (Entman 2003, p.418). As Macron's importance framing was most dominant when he was physically in the territory, this suggests Macron has greatest capacity to influence framing in New Caledonia when he is physically there.

5.4.1.7 France in the Pacific

Articles including *France in the Pacific* discussed the role of France in the region. Such articles considered France's current involvement, as well as France's aspirations for further involvement, in the Pacific. Although one of the least influential thematic frames - it was included in only 5.46% of LNC articles (17) and 3.17% of *La1ère* articles (3) - it does provide interesting insights into why certain frames became dominant in the media.

Most of the articles including the frame were published from May onwards. This coincides with Macron's visit to New Caledonia when he spoke about France's place and strategy in the "Indopacific" (May 4 LNC article, "What we have done has no precedent"). Many articles during this period referenced Macron's direct framing that France belongs in the Indopacific.

This frame maintained dominance throughout the data collection period. There was no direct framing contest (that France *does not* belong in the Indopacific) and nor was there an importance framing contest (that it is not important to discuss the role of France in the Indopacific). Articles on May 17 and May 25 show the persistence of this frame (Frédière 2018g; Gallo 2018). These articles discussed relations with Japan around the time of the Japan-Pacific summit, linking back to the Indopacific strategy (Frédière 2018g; Gallo 2018). In part, these frames remained dominant because Macron actively kept them in the spotlight (ALP 2018a).

Macron's critics also reinforced his framing. In the October 4 LNC article "In the case of Caledonian independence, France will pull back rapidly" (Mainguet 2018g), 2017 presidential candidate François Asselineau argued that nothing has happened regarding the Indopacific strategy since Macron's speech in May. Although this comment is critical of Macron's actions (as is to be expected from one of his rivals), Asselineau uses the same terminology of Indopacific (rather than Asia-Pacific or Pacific). He then goes on to say that he wishes Nouméa to become a "ray of light for France in the Pacific", which is consistent with Macron's Indopacific strategy. This also reinforces Macron's importance framing, as it shows that this is a topic worthy of discussion.

5.4.1.8. France as an influencer

Articles including this thematic frame discussed the role of France in either bringing together or dividing New Caledonian society. Although this frame was found throughout the data collection period, it remained a relatively minor frame. It was included in only 5.88% of LNC articles (14) and in only 1.39% of *La1ère* articles (1).

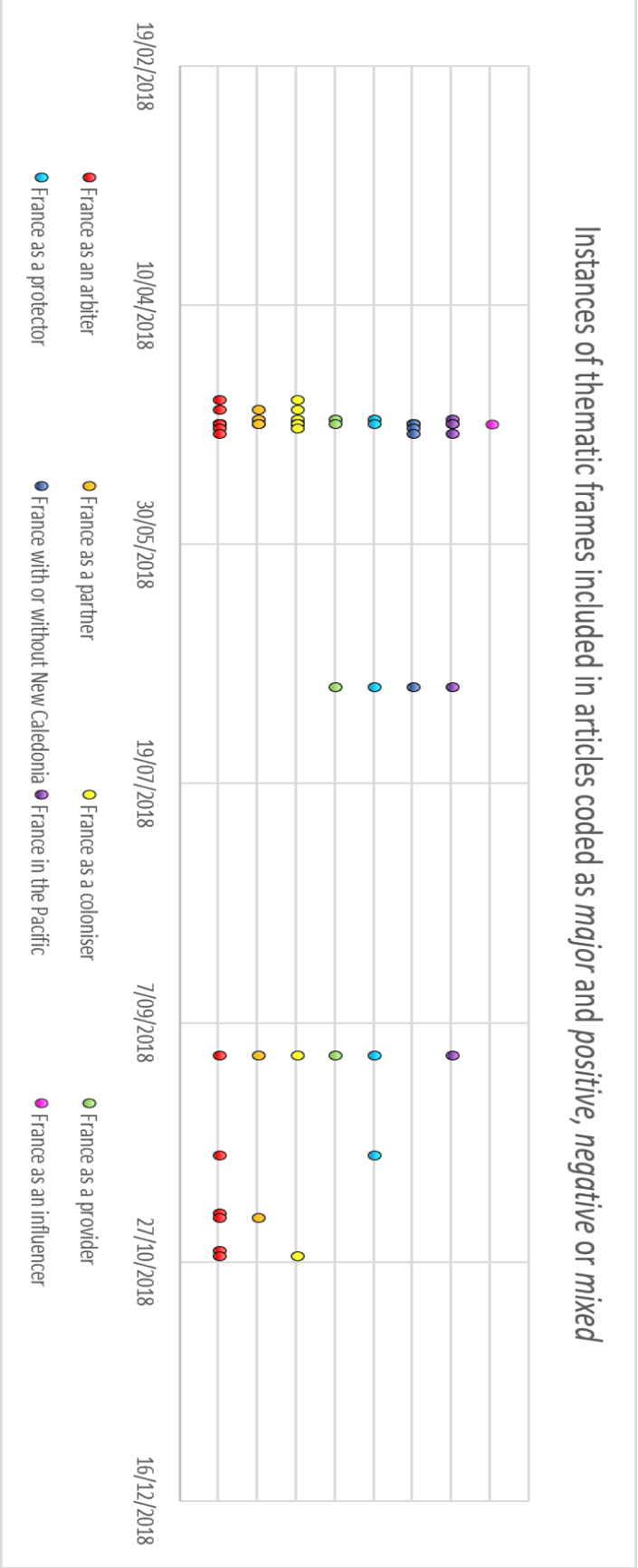
In the May 2 LNC article, “*Le Rassemblement* launch their campaign”, *Le Rassemblement* argue that New Caledonia should remain with France to realise “our common destiny, our unity and our future in peace” (LNC 2018c). This argument introduced the frame that France influences the social cohesion of New Caledonian society in a positive way. Another clear example is the August 13 LNC article, “Young people mobilising in the referendum year” (Maurel 2018). In this article, a quote is provided by a member of the Local Youth Integration Mission which argues that the “values of the Republic” of “solidarity and citizenship” are important for helping youth to “participate in societal life”. In this case, the image is that French “values” are a healthy part of New Caledonian society.

5.4.2. Thematic frames of France in the most salient articles

18 articles (15 LNC and three *La1ère* articles) were coded as including France in a *major* capacity and as emotively *positive*, *negative* or *mixed* towards France. Figure 5.25 shows the thematic frames included in these 18 most salient articles. Each dot on Figure 5.25 does not represent one article but one instance of a thematic frame being included in an article.

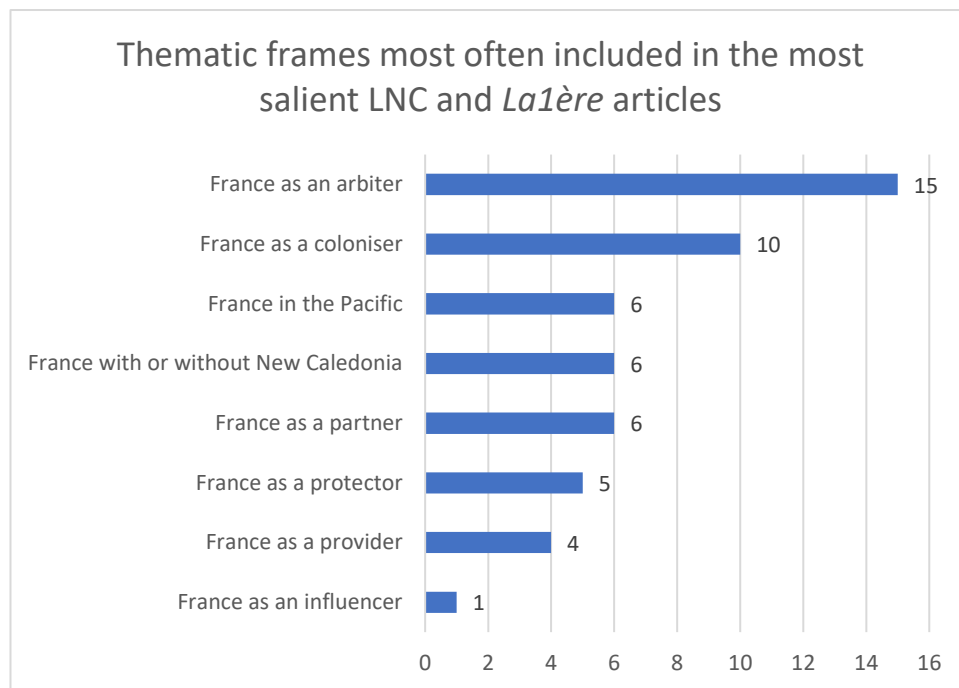
Figure 5.25 shows that the thematic frame most often included in the most salient articles was *France as an arbiter* (included in 15 of the 18 articles). This and the frequency of other thematic frames in the 18 most salient articles is included in Figure 5.26.

Figure 5.25:



Source: Author's own

Figure 5.26:



Source: Author's own

It is interesting to compare Figure 5.26 to Figures 5.20 and 5.21. There are some similarities between these three Figures; *France as an arbiter* is the most common thematic frame observed among the most salient articles and among the entire 310 articles. *France as an influencer* is also consistently one of the least common thematic frames observed among the most salient articles and among all the articles. Some frames are proportionally more common in the most salient articles than all the articles. For example, *France as a coloniser* is the second most common thematic frame of the most salient articles, but only the 3rd and 4th equal most common thematic frames of the LNC and *La1ère* articles, respectively. This shows that the prominence of thematic frames in the most salient articles does not necessarily correlate to the prominence of thematic frames in all the articles.

Interestingly, eight of the most salient articles (53.33%) were sourced from international news agencies based in France, such as *Agence France-Presse* (AFP). These eight were all published on the LNC website. Of all LNC articles, only 10.92% were sourced from an international publisher. This creates a potential bias in this research. As AFP is based in France, it is possible that articles written by AFP may place a stronger emphasis on France in the articles. Consequently, AFP articles may be more likely to be coded as having *major* visibility of France or as being more emotive towards France. Therefore, it may be more likely that these articles are included in the 'most salient' subset.

This could also contribute to different thematic frames being more prominent proportionally in the 'most salient' articles than in all the articles. It is possible that the metropolitan French journalists

employed by AFP would have different internal framing or “schemata” of France and New Caledonia as compared to New Caledonian-based journalists (Entman 1993, p.52). For example, a metropolitan journalist’s understanding and “schemata” of New Caledonia-France relations might be based off their knowledge and memory of the *événements* era. This provides a plausible explanation why the *France as a coloniser* frame, which is rooted in historic New Caledonia-France relations, was more dominant in the most salient articles.

5.4.3. Frames of Europe/EU

As previously discussed in this chapter, Europe/EU was significantly less visible than France in the articles collected. Consequently, a systematic analysis by thematic frame was not completed. However, some observations can be made.

Europe/EU was framed most often as a *protector* of New Caledonia and other Pacific island countries. In the April 20 LNC article, “Faced with Chinese influence, good governance must be guaranteed” (Mainguet 2018f), Europe/EU, alongside France, is framed as a present-day and future protector of New Caledonia.

In this article, Europe/EU is also framed as a *development actor*: “If the Chinese are so successful, it is that they are less demanding in terms of governance, while France or the European Union condition their aid” (Mainguet 2018f). This presents the frame that the EU as a development actor may be seen as less attractive due to its use of aid conditionality.

Being European and having a European passport was also framed as desirable (T.G, *et al.* 2018; AFP 2018a). Similarly, having European citizenship was seen as important, and in the October 5 LNC article, “The State outlines the legal consequences of the referendum”, it is reported that European citizenship will be maintained by New Caledonians in the case of a “no” vote to independence (Frédière 2018h).

Although it occurred less frequently and less emotively than the above three frames, Europe/EU was also mentioned as an *economic power*. This was typically in reference to the economic institutions of the EU or the Euro (Mainguet 2018h; Mainguet 2018i).

6. Interview Analysis Chapter

6.1. Introduction

The semi-structured interviews with New Caledonian journalists discussed a wide variety of topics related to how journalists cover the referendum. As this research is guided by Entman's cascading activation framing model and is interested in the frame production process, this chapter analyses the interviews and what they reveal about the media and their interactions with the public, elites, the media, the State and social media.

6.2. The media

All the journalists interviewed acknowledged that their news media organisation produced both proactive and reactive content covering the referendum. The interviewees noted also that they published articles that were explicitly about referendum issues as well as articles where the referendum was mentioned only briefly. The journalist from LNC, Caprais, explained that the latter type of coverage occurred because the referendum "happens a little bit in the background of each subject". The content analysis (see Chapter 5) confirmed this journalistic opinion; many articles contained a keyword for the referendum but, after analysis, turned out to be largely unrelated to the referendum. For example, the 18th April LNC article, "After the death of Mathieu, I wanted it all to end" (Barraud 2018), the 17th May LNC article, "Caledonia at the Japan-Pacific summit" (Frédière 2018g), and the 22nd June LNC article, "Emotion, sadness, and gratitude at Robert Frouin's funeral" (Cotignola 2018). While these articles were not explicitly about the referendum, the referendum was mentioned "in the background" of these news stories. The content analysis protocol allowed this thesis to capture and analyse this type of article.

Caprais observed that, as the referendum drew nearer, LNC started to ask questions with more depth: what will happen after the referendum? What could change if there was a "yes" vote? Caprais mentioned a specific LNC article of this nature: "Money: what are the possible evolutions?" (Mainguet 2018i).

The journalist from *La1ère*, de la Bourdonnaye, mentioned that *La1ère* was also committed to producing articles exploring the issue of the referendum in depth. This included building editorial projects around the referendum to explain the related issues, linking discussion of the referendum to economic issues and social issues, and considering these issues from the perspectives of the different regions of New Caledonia.

In the eyes of the journalist from *La Voix de Kanaky*, their news outlet also took on an agenda-setting role, deciding when/how the referendum would be discussed. This journalist mentioned that one of

the reasons for including an 'international page' in each publication is to stress to readers that they have support from neighbouring countries in their attempt to become independent. This shows that all three media sources had a role in selecting how the referendum would be discussed.

6.3. Interaction between the media and the public

The interview with Caprais revealed that journalists' reporting can be influenced by their perceptions of the public. Although Caprais didn't specifically make this point, it was demonstrated in the way he revealed his own perceptions of the public. Caprais argued that people are interested in what may change, rather than what stays the same: "what is important, is to write about money, something that many people worry about".⁹ Other journalists also held perceptions of the public. De la Bourdonnaye revealed his perception that the public need assistance from the media to better understand the referendum question:

We need to explain the issues behind the question. It means what to remain a part of France. It means what to become independent. I think that we need to help situate people, that's our role, that the citizens understand what the consequences of the two possible choices will be.

This suggests that reporting was influenced by and tailored to journalists' perceptions of the public's interests, needs and expectations. At face value, this appears to stress the importance of the public, that they can feed news frames 'back up the cascade' in Entman's cascading activation framing model (2003 p.419). However, what the media perceives about the public may not necessarily be true. Therefore, the media have a greater capacity to influence framing than the public, as it is up to the media to decide how they interpret and perceive the public's interests, needs and expectations.

In the New Caledonian context, this phenomenon of the replacement of the public's voice by the media's perception of the public was likely exacerbated by limited information about their interests and knowledge. Only three national surveys took place between 2017 and 2018 on the topic of the referendum. This deficit of insight into public opinion was highlighted in the interview with Caprais when he discussed how it was difficult for newsmakers to know the public's feelings and attitudes towards the referendum and related issues:

The only way we have for people in society to give their views is, in fact, it's just that. It's going to meetings with people and writing up about it. It's called a *micro-trottoir*.¹⁰ We include the photo of the person, and some lines about their opinion... It's on the street, or sometimes at an event, at a particular protest.

⁹ There was discussion over whether the Pacific Franc would remain fixed to the Euro, whether they might eventually change to use the Euro, or, if the majority vote for independence, whether a new currency would be introduced (Mainguet 2018i).

¹⁰ This literary translates to "microphone-pavement".

This statement adds clarity to the nature of the interaction between the public and the media; media professionals in New Caledonia actively seek out public opinion to include in and inform their news items. As such, there is some capacity for the public to influence media framing. However, a lot of power is still held by the media. The journalists would get to decide at which meetings or events they would do a *micro-trottoir*, they would get to select who is represented in the article, and if the individuals say more than just “some lines”, the journalists would get to decide which of their comments are published. Thus, even if an individual’s comments make it into the news, the media has a final say over the framing. This confirms the hierarchical cascade model’s depiction of the interaction between the media and the public; frames sent upwards by the public are filtered through the media processes and consideration before being published in the news.

The journalist from *La Voix de Kanaky* also discussed the interaction between the media outlet and the public. In the build-up to the referendum, *La Voix de Kanaky* published submissions sent in by the public: “We still have an email set up which allows readers and people on the outside of the organization to send in their articles.” In part, this could be because, as the journalist stressed, *La Voix de Kanaky* is a small organisation and “not the usual media with a big boss”. While they accept and publish submissions, the journalist did also explain that these submissions still go in front of an editorial committee which filters them and makes small edits where necessary. The journalist mentions that “we try always to include a line which links to “‘Kanaky, we need you’... there is always this orientation”. This shows that even though, in a more grassroots context, where the public may have a greater capacity to influence framing, the public’s frames are still filtered through the media processes and considerations.

6.4 Interaction between the media and the elites

While the journalists interviewed admitted a limited interaction between the public and the media, they commented that the interactions between the elites and the media appeared to be stronger and more robust.

Caprais, for example, confirmed the hierarchical relations between elites and media, as argued by Entman’s cascading activation framing model:

Much more often, we give a platform to politicians, to institutions, rather than the people, the citizens. That might be a mistake, but we talk with the people we hold in high-esteem, rather than citizens. That’s a reality.

While this shows the media typically favour the elites over the public, thus giving the elites a greater capacity to influence framing, there are still limitations to this capacity. More specifically, framing of the elites must still go through the media’s filtering processes before being published as news frames. Furthermore, not all elites necessarily have the same capacity to influence the media. Although

Caprais stressed that LNC gives a voice or a platform to everyone, he specified that ‘everyone’ means “all the parties which are included in Congress... Everybody who is in Congress is able to be included in our newspaper, there is no debate about it. They are in the newspaper.” Caprais’ statement is reminiscent of Bennett’s indexing hypothesis, that the range of debate in news media is limited to the ranges of argument explored by mainstream government officials (1990, p.106). This means that more radical pro-independence or radical anti-independence voices may not be getting mainstream coverage if their opinions are not represented in Congress.

6.5 Systemic factors favouring the anti-independentist camp

Although Caprais and de la Bourdonnaye stressed their own neutrality and the neutrality of their and each other’s organisations, Caprais outlined some systemic factors which tend to favour the anti-independentist camp. Caprais hypothesised that any advantage given to anti-independentist parties is largely due to how the political parties structure themselves and choose to communicate:

We receive many more solicitations and requests from the loyalist camp, many, many more than which come from the *indépendantiste* camp... The big parties here, CE, LRC, the Republicans, they hold a press conference twice a week, sometimes more. But the *indépendantistes*, they hold a lot fewer... I get the impression that we receive ten requests from the loyalists for a single one from the *indépendantistes*.

While Caprais does say that the political reporter covering the independentist camp does “go out to find them”,¹¹ he breaks down why this is often not enough:

When we are writing an edition for tomorrow, there are some days when not much is happening here, and there are some days when we ask... how are we going to fill the eight pages? We have some stories, maybe four are strong, three might be a bit weak, and still, we are missing one. If someone has something to say on that day, they will almost surely be included in the newspaper... We include loyalist voices more often because they have European methods...

Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p.8) wrote that official sponsors, such as political organisations in government, have an advantage in determining framing as they are more likely to have “routine relationships” with journalists. In the New Caledonian context, it is clear the anti-independence parties are particularly favoured by this factor of “routine relationships” and other factors of media organisation and practice.

Caprais confirmed Gamson and Modigliani’s argument when he said, “rather than personal connections, there is a history of a network, and it is in the way the political parties structure themselves and their attitudes towards the media.”

¹¹ In the interview, Caprais said that the journalist dedicating to covering the *indépendantistes* is Yann Mainguet and the journalist dedicated to covering the *anti-indépendantistes* is Philippe Frédière.

Caprais did hypothesise that independentist parties might communicate with more success in other ways which are not depicted in the cascading activation framing model: “The FLNKS, for example, made a big campaign around the tribes, and moved around the Grande Terre... they went to meet the people... For them, it's their territory, and so their communication was aimed at the terrain and not the media.”

As Entman’s cascading activation framing model was initially designed to explain the US media framing hierarchy, it is, therefore, oriented towards Western media practices and is insufficient in explaining media framing in non-Western communication processes. As this thesis conducted an analysis of news media articles by two media sources which tend to follow Western media practices, LNC and *La1ère*, this thesis is not in a position to propose an alternative model.

In the interview with the journalist from *La Voix de Kanaky*, the journalist commented that “Kanak always make the effort to better know the rules of western society and to adapt to it.” While this might be true at an individual level, it does not necessarily mean that Kanak or independentist political parties completely adopt western practices, and so doesn’t contradict the statements made by Caprais.

6.6 Interaction between the media and the state

Although the state is placed at the top of the hierarchy in Entman’s cascading activation framing model, *l'État* was hardly discussed in the interviews. The only time *l'État* was discussed was when Caprais said that the High Commission representing the State in New Caledonia “often speak in the name of the State”. He elaborated, “If we need to know the position of the State on a subject, we go to the High Commission and the representatives of the State.” This does show that there is some sort of interaction between the media and *l'État*, although it does not indicate how great is the capacity of *l'État* to influence media framing. The turn of phrase “If we need to know... we go to the High Commission” suggests that the media outlets have an agency to decide when and where the State has a voice in their articles. Of course, as the interviews were conducted exclusively with journalists, it may be possible that they were inclined to over-emphasize the importance of the media compared to the State.

6.7 Interaction between the media and social media

In the interview, de la Bourdonnaye discussed how *La1ère* interacts with social media and how the New Caledonian media landscape has been altered with the rise of social media. De la Bourdonnaye expressed worry and concern when talking about the dangers of social media, and more specifically how it can be hijacked by just a few people who may even be using fake accounts: “There are lots of

fake accounts". This recalls Entman and Usher's discussion of how rogue actors like trolls and fake news disseminators work to disrupt traditional hierarchies (2018, p.299).

De la Bourdonnaye also expressed that social media holds the potential to be a positive factor. De la Bourdonnaye said:

We use it, but not as a source of information, but rather as an alert. What is on social media, I don't always consider that as 'information', it becomes information once it is verified and regrouped. On the other hand, if I consider myself to be a good journalist, then it is a thing of information, a thing of images, a thing of sound, a thing of plenty of things... What is on social media is not a source of information, it is an alert, and there's a big difference.

This shows that information from social media, like information from the public or elites, must first go through the media's filtering processes before being published as news.

7. Discussion

This chapter discusses the main findings of the article analysis and interviews, positioning them against the theoretical approach outlined earlier in Chapter 3. This chapter will start by revisiting the theorisation that informed this research, drawing special attention to Entman's cascading activation framing theory. Then, the chapter will elaborate on how theoretical concepts were used to analyse and understand the process of framing, explicated by rich empirical findings from the news articles and interviews with journalists. Ultimately, this chapter will argue that Entman's hierarchical cascading activation framing model is applicable to explain the framing process that took place in the context of the 2018 New Caledonian referendum. Importantly, this chapter will propose some alteration and new insights into the theorising of framing.

7.1. Theoretical starting point

7.1.2. Predecessors to cascading activation

The dominant theory guiding this research was Entman's cascading activation framing theory. As Entman's construction of the theory was heavily influenced by his predecessors, this research was also informed by the works of other contributors to the field of media framing.

To begin, this research was informed by consideration of the factors which can influence the prominence and salience of frames. These include association with cultural symbols/resonance, role of official sponsors, media organisation and practice, placement of a subject within the article, and degree of repetition of the subject within the article (Gamson 1989, p.161; Gamson and Modigliani 1989, p.6; Entman 1993, p.53; Entman 2003, p.417). The idea that multiple factors can come together to determine the impact or salience of a frame was influential for this research.

This research also considered Bennett's indexing hypothesis (Bennett 1990). Bennett argued that the range of debate in the media reflects or indexes the range of arguments held and debated by mainstream government officials (Bennett 1990, p.106). This places the emphasis on those in power, rather than politicians or political groups in the margins. This was observed in the interviews with journalists when they told the researcher that it was the politicians elected to Congress who were given a voice in the news.

7.1.3. Cascading activation framing theory

The theorists of the 1990s mentioned above contributed much to this study's conceptualisation of the framing process, the factors influencing it, and what frames it produces. Yet, Entman's cascading activation framing theory was the theoretical cornerstone of this study (see Figure 3.1). This research was interested in Entman's explanation of framing contests – specifically, that the winner of framing

contests is largely determined by those with the political upper hand (2003, p.419). Therefore, Entman's hierarchical 'cascade model' (see Figure 3.1) was deemed to be particularly useful, as it outlines which stakeholders hold the most power to influence frames. In addition to the hierarchy, Entman's theory discusses the spectrum of frame dominance to frame parity and it includes four factors which contribute to determining who wins framing contests: motivation, cultural congruence, power, and strategy (2004, p.13).

This thesis also considered the updated version of the cascading activation framing theory put forward by Entman and Usher in 2018 (see Figure 3.3). The updated theoretical model by Entman and Usher discussed factors behind changing media practices and the process of frame development. This thesis has engaged with this discussion and considered the rise of platforms, algorithms, digital analytics, and rogue actors like bots and trolls (Entman and Usher 2018, p.299).

Overall, this thesis was particularly interested in testing whether Entman's original cascading activation framing model would be applicable to a different media context (in this case, the New Caledonian context). Chapter 3 proposed a revisited cascade model, adapting it for the New Caledonian environment (See Figure 3.2).

In the revisited cascade model, *indépendantiste* elites and *anti-indépendantiste* elites were argued to occupy separate positions in the 'cascade', to reflect the nature of the political divide in New Caledonia. This proposed model was introduced as a starting point for considering the applicability of Entman's cascading activation framing theory in the New Caledonian context.

The theoretical considerations guided the choice of methods used in this research. The methods applied to this research enabled deep and intensive analysis, answering the research questions of this study:

RQ1: *How did media frames of France and Europe/EU contribute to discussion on the future of New Caledonia in the context of the referendum?*

RQ2: *How does the media interact with other stakeholders, such as politicians and the public, to create frames of France and Europe/EU in the context of the referendum?*

S-RQ1: *What is the visibility of France in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?*

S-RQ2: *What is the visibility of Europe/EU in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?*

S-RQ3: *How is France portrayed emotively in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?*

S-RQ4: *How is Europe/EU portrayed emotively in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?*

S-RQ5: *In what ways is France discussed in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?*

S-RQ6: *In what ways is Europe/EU discussed in New Caledonian news articles in the context of the independence referendum?*

7.2. Discussion of empirical findings of article analysis

7.2.1. Visibility

Chapter 5 answered S-RQ1 by concluding that France was of limited visibility in the news articles included in the sample. In LNC and *La1ère* articles, France was most often included in a *minor* capacity. A keyword for France was also rarely included in the title and symbols or figures representing France were rarely included in the main visual image of the article.

In answer to S-RQ2, there was even less visibility of Europe/EU in the news media articles included in the sample. Fewer articles included search terms for Europe/EU and all those which did only included Europe/EU in a *minor* capacity. A keyword for Europe/EU was never included in the title and very few articles included a main visual image representing Europe/EU.

7.2.2. Emotiveness

Chapter 5 answered S-RQ3 by concluding that articles were typically *neutral* or *neutral-positive* towards France. A significant proportion of LNC articles (21.43%) were also *positive* towards France. This shows that there was broad consensus in framing France on the *neutral-to-positive* half of the emotive spectrum. This is consistent with the emotive framing of the main visual image; these were almost exclusively *neutral*, *neutral-positive* and *positive*. While there was a contest of the emotive framing of France (evidenced by the fact that there were some *neutral-negative* and *negative* articles), the *neutral-to-positive* framing dominated, therefore winning the framing contest.

In answer to S-RQ4, articles were typically *neutral* towards Europe/EU. Two-thirds of the *La1ère* articles were *neutral* towards Europe/EU (although only 4.17% of *La1ère* articles included France). While only 13.45% of LNC articles included Europe/EU, 6.72% of LNC articles were *neutral* towards Europe/EU. Similarly, all main visual images including Europe/EU were *neutral-positive*. This shows that the leading trend was to frame Europe/EU in a *neutral-to-neutral-positive* way.

7.2.2.1. Factors influencing emotiveness

This research observed that local politicians, regardless of their stance towards independence, tended to be positive towards France. The independentists desired a post-independence relationship with France, so they tended to be positive towards France, and the anti-independentists wanted New Caledonia to remain a part of France, so they also tended to be positive towards France. As observed in 5.3.1.1.2, the actors quoted and given a platform within the articles were able to influence the

overall emotive charge of France in the articles. Therefore, it is likely that elite agreement towards France influenced the overall framing of France as typically being *neutral-to-positive*.

The content of the article and the journalist style and commentary and speculation within the article also influenced emotiveness (see sections 5.3.1.1.1 – 5.3.1.1.3). These elements reflect the theoretical arguments put forward by Gamson (1989). Gamson argued that when identifying frames, it is most important to analyse the “interpretative commentary” (Gamson 1989, p.158). The factors influencing emotiveness observed by this research are examples of “interpretative commentary”.

This research also considered Gamson’s point that a frame may be included in news content as a result of multiple “senders”; the editor, the journalist, those quoted etc. (Gamson 1989, p.159). When determining the factors that can influence the emotive framing, this thesis considered that both the actor interviewed and the journalist may be “senders” of emotive framing.

7.2.3. Correlation between visibility and emotiveness

This research examined the correlation between visibility and emotiveness indicators in order to determine which articles were the most salient and which thematic frames were most prominent in the most salient articles (as shown in Chapter Five). By designing and incorporating this novel analytical mechanism, this research was able to answer S-RQ1, S-RQ3 and S-RQ5 with greater insight as it gave a better understanding of what emotive and thematic framing of France would have greater salience.

This research observed that, while *minor/neutral* articles were consistently in the background throughout the data collection period, the most visible articles tended to be the strongly emotive ones (typically *positive* or *mixed*). Such articles tended to appear at what would likely be considered more crucial moments in the referendum campaign – when Macron visited New Caledonia as well as in the final month before the referendum.

This analytical combination also led this research to a new question for future investigation: if the public reads one *major/positive* article and ten *minor/neutral* articles, are they more likely to come away with a positive view of France or an apathetic view? While this research did not attempt to quantify salience or determine an exclusive list of exact factors which can influence salience, it has contributed to the field of framing scholarship by scrutinising the notion of salience as an important construct and linking it to the emotive element.

7.2.4 Thematic Frames

7.2.4.1 Thematic frames in the articles

In answering S-RQ5, this research observed that there was a wide range of thematic frames of France in the context of the referendum. France was most often framed as an arbiter: 109 LNC articles (45.8%) and 41 *La1ère* articles (56.94%) included at least one instance where France was framed in this way.

In answer to S-RQ6, while Europe/EU was also framed in various thematic ways, there was less variety in the thematic framing. Also, in general, these frames were less salient as all articles had Europe/EU as a *minor* focus and tended to be *neutral*.

The analysis of thematic frames allowed this research to comprehensively answer RQ1. A variety of different thematic frames of France and Europe/EU contributed to discussion in the context of the referendum. These thematic frames considered the relationship between New Caledonia and France in terms of the past, present and future. The historic New Caledonia-France relationship was discussed in terms of the past with the frame of *France as a coloniser*. *France as a provider* and *protector* also considered how France had previously delivered (or failed to deliver) for New Caledonia. Present day interactions between New Caledonia and France were discussed with the frame of *France as an arbiter*. This frame considered whether *l'Etat* was presently organising the referendum in a fair and neutral way. The present-day relationship between France and New Caledonia was also discussed within the thematic frame of *France as a partner*. As discussed in 5.4.1.2, the current relationship framing only endured while Macron was in New Caledonia and actively pushing that framing. *France as a partner* more often prompted discussion of the future New Caledonia-France relationship. This can be seen in Figure 5.24, where the two most dominant sub-frames (represented by the red and blue dots) argued for or against possible future relationships.

This research also drew on analysis correlating between emotiveness and visibility to determine which thematic frames were included in the most salient articles. This research observed that the most prominent thematic frames among the most salient articles differ from the most prominent thematic frames found among all articles. This stresses the importance of the construct of salience, as the most salient articles may tell a different story of how the subject was emotively and thematically framed.

It was also observed that there was a greater frequency of articles sourced from AFP and other international agencies among the most salient articles. It is possible that this may have contributed to there being a higher frequency of *mixed* articles in the most salient articles. The sourcing may have also contributed to different thematic frames being more or less prominent in the most salient articles as compared to all the articles. This is because the articles written by AFP and other international journalists may have been written with different internal framings of New Caledonia and the

relationship between France and New Caledonia. These articles are still relevant to this study as it was an editorial decision by LNC to publish these articles on its website. Like locally written articles, these articles were placed in a position where they would be read by New Caledonians, and so the frames within these articles may have influenced the framing of France and Europe/EU in the context of the referendum among New Caledonian readers.

One limitation of this study is that it did not assess the notion of cultural resonance. Entman argues that cultural resonance and culturally familiar symbols are a factor influencing salience (Entman 1993, p.53; Entman 2003, p.417). When determining the most salient articles, this research used variables of visibility and emotiveness. As many of the articles identified as 'most salient' were written by international journalists, it is possible that the content of these articles may have been less culturally congruent with the New Caledonian readership. Consequently, it is possible that some of the articles listed as 'most salient' may not truly be the most salient articles published during the data collection period. Future studies may triangulate the media findings and trace the reception of different frames by different sources among New Caledonian audiences.

7.2.4.2. *Framing contests*

This research put forward a novel idea by emphasising that framing contests can be about which framing of an issue is the most important. Traditionally, framing contests are considered to occur when one party puts forward one conception of the world (selecting some aspects of perceived reality) which infiltrates the media, and then another party puts forward a directly opposing idea/frame/narrative, which also infiltrates the media. The framing contest is over which perceived conception of the world is reiterated more often by the media, thus giving it the capacity to greater influence the public's internal framing. A clear example of this is Entman's initial demonstration of the cascading activation theory (2003 p.416, using the example of frames and counter-frames following 9/11).

In this research, where France and Europe/EU were the subjects under analysis, it was observed that the leading trend of emotive framing was on the *neutral-to-positive* side of the spectrum. Even if there were some contests between the frames, such as whether France was a positive or negative economic provider, the lack of *negative* emotive framing enabled the more *positive* framing of France to clearly win these contests. As such, this thesis was also interested in the contests that were less clear, i.e. in which ways was it more important to discuss France. To differentiate between these two types of framing, this thesis referred to them as direct framing contests and importance framing contests.

Three framing contests were observed and analysed in Chapter 5.

7.2.4.2.1. Macron's framing of the current France-New Caledonia relationship

Until Macron's arrival in New Caledonia, *France as a partner* was most often discussed in terms of France's post-referendum relationship with New Caledonia. If New Caledonia voted for independence, the *indépendantistes* argued that would look like a post-independence relationship with France. If New Caledonia voted to remain with France, the *anti-indépendantistes* argued New Caledonia could have greater autonomy within the French Republic. Both conceptions of the world are consistent with the importance frame emphasising New Caledonia's post-referendum relationship with France.

When Macron arrived in New Caledonia, he attempted to reframe what was most important to New Caledonia's current relationship with France, a "sovereignty within sovereignty" (see 5.4.1.2). As observed in Chapter 5, this importance framing only achieved dominance for a short while. Following his departure, discussion in the media returned to the post-referendum relationship. In this instance, Macron also had a limited scope of discussion, as he was constrained by the need to be neutral and diplomatic. While Macron may ordinarily have the greatest capacity to influence framing, this thesis argues that factors such as scope of discussion and location contributed to his framing losing dominance not long after he left New Caledonia.

7.2.4.2.2. Macron's framing of the value of New Caledonia to France

Chapter 5 put Entman's hierarchical model to the test once again when considering Macron's attempt to reframe the value of New Caledonia to France as more important for discussion than the value of France to New Caledonia (see 5.4.1.6). Chapter 5 observed that Macron's rhetoric and standpoint for considering the New Caledonia-France relationship successfully cascaded from Macron to the local elites and the media.

Over time and as the referendum drew near, Macron's importance framing had less sway. That is to be expected given that New Caledonian's were literally voting on the value of France to New Caledonia. This instance of Macron successfully influencing framing is also consistent with the hypothesis that Macron's position at the top of the framing hierarchy only allows him the greatest capacity to determine framing in New Caledonia when he is physically in or frequently talking about New Caledonia.

In this instance, the frame of the value of New Caledonia to France was within Macron's scope of discussion. As the President of the French Republic, Macron was uniquely positioned to discuss the value of New Caledonia to France. This could explain why Macron's framing in this instance remained influential for longer than when he was discussing the current New Caledonia-France relationship. In the example about the current France-New Caledonia relationship, both scope of discussion and location were factors limiting Macron's framing power: Macron's frame was last discussed on May 8.

However, in the example about the value of New Caledonia to France, when only location was a limiting factor, Macron's frame lasted until June 29.

7.2.4.2.3. Macron's framing of France's Indopacific strategy

When Macron was visiting New Caledonia, he also talked about his Indopacific strategy. Macron's direct framing, that France belongs in the Indopacific, and his importance framing, that it is importance to discuss the role of France in the Indopacific, were never challenged.

This is consistent with the argument that factors of scope of discussion and location can limit the president's framing capacity. In this instance, France's Indopacific strategy was well within Macron's scope of discussion, and so this factor did not limit Macron's framing capacity. Furthermore, while Macron did not physically return to New Caledonia, this framing was kept active by local elites and by Macron's critics.

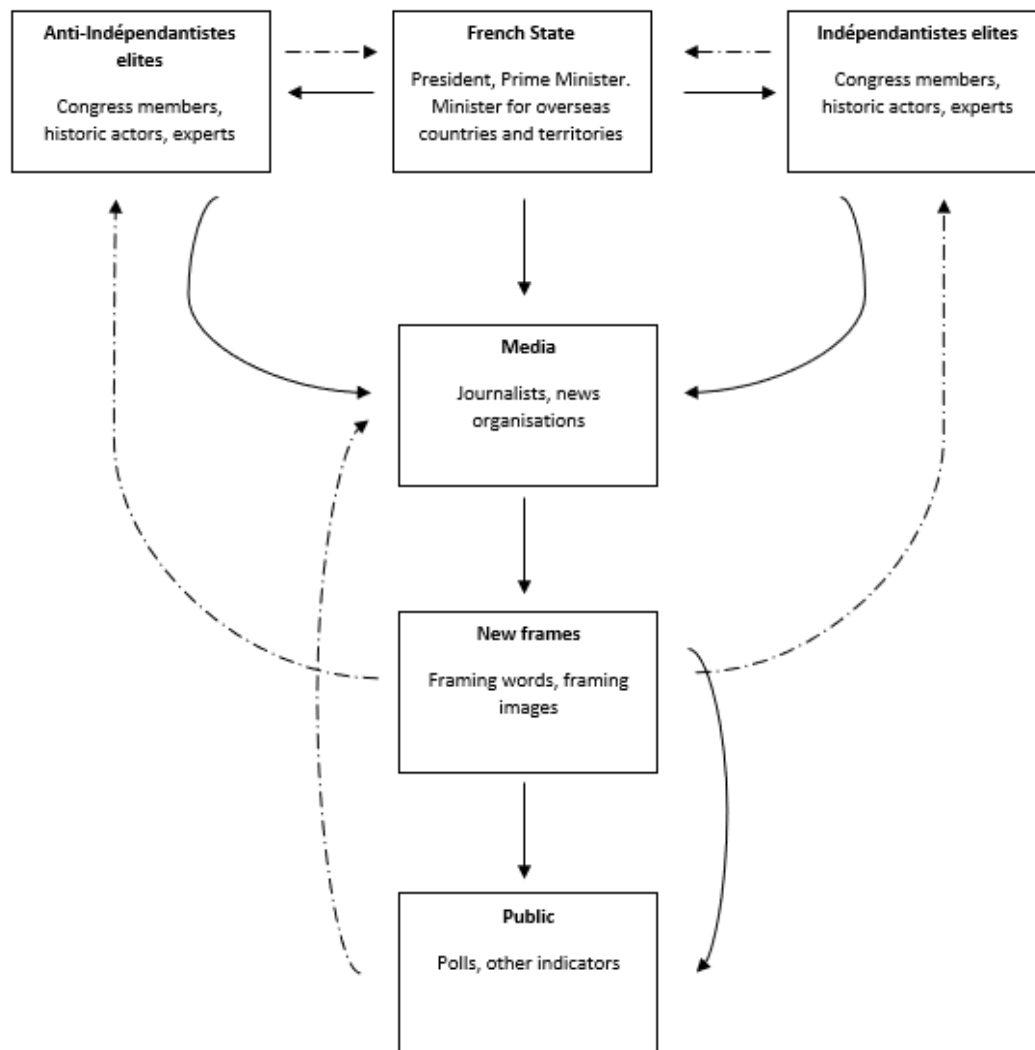
7.3. Contribution of empirical findings of article analysis to cascade model

RQ2 asks: *How does the media interact with other stakeholders, such as politicians or the public, to create frames of France Europe/EU in the context of the referendum.* This discussion so far suggests that Macron's capacity to influence framing can be limited by factors such as scope of discussion and location. The examples of Macron's framing of the current France-New Caledonia relationship and the value of New Caledonia to France show that when Macron leaves the territory, his framing gradually loses dominance and the framing of local elites regains dominance. The effect of this is exacerbated when is scope of discussion is limited.

As these factors appear to be particularly pertinent to New Caledonia – New Caledonia is physically separate from metropolitan France, and Macron's scope of discussion was limited because he strived to be neutral and so New Caledonian's could freely decide their future – this thesis proposes brining them into the cascading activation framing model adapted for the New Caledonian context.

This thesis places both the state and the local elites in the top tier of the hierarchy. Depending on whether Macron is in New Caledonia and whether his scope of discussion is limited, either Macron or the local elites could have greatest capacity to influence framing. This is shown in Figure 7.1 where the state and local elites are both placed in the top tier (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Updated proposed model considering empirical findings from article analysis



Source: Author's own

7.4. Contribution of empirical findings of interview analysis to cascade model

Chapter 6 systematically analysed the journalists' perceptions of the relationships and communication pathways between the media and the other actors in the cascade model, further answering RQ2.

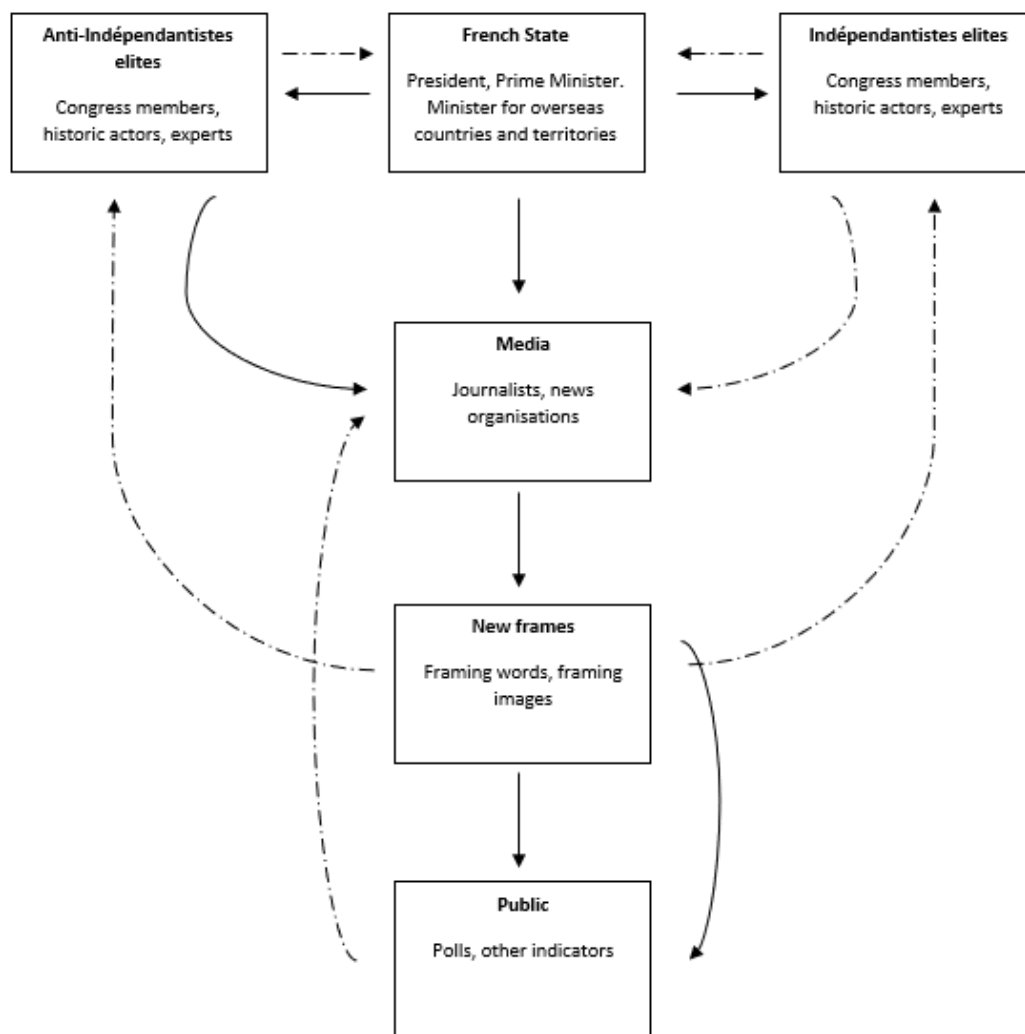
Key findings from Chapter 6 include the following:

- 1) The media hold great influence within the cascading activation framing model
- 2) The media hold greater influence than the public because the media has the final say over when and how the public's voice is included in the media
- 3) The interaction between the elites and the media is more robust and favoured than the interaction between the public and the media
- 4) Mainstream elites who are represented in Congress are favoured by the newsmakers

These findings are consistent with Entman's original cascading activation framing model as well as Bennet's indexing hypothesis.

This thesis also observed systemic factors favouring the *anti-indépendantistes* camp. This is consistent with Gamson and Modigliani's argument that media organisation and practice contribute to determining which actors have a greater capacity to have their framing reflected in the media (1989, p.8). A version of the cascading activation framing model - adapted to the New Caledonian context - reflects this, as proposed in Figure 7.2 below. This figure illustrates the imbalance between the independentist elites and the anti-independentist elites in their influence on media framing. There is a direct line going down from the anti-independentist elites to the media and a dotted line going down from the independentist elites to the media. The dotted line represents that the independentists have less capacity to influence framing than the anti-independentists.

Figure 7.2: Updated proposed model considering empirical findings about systemic factors favouring the anti-independentists

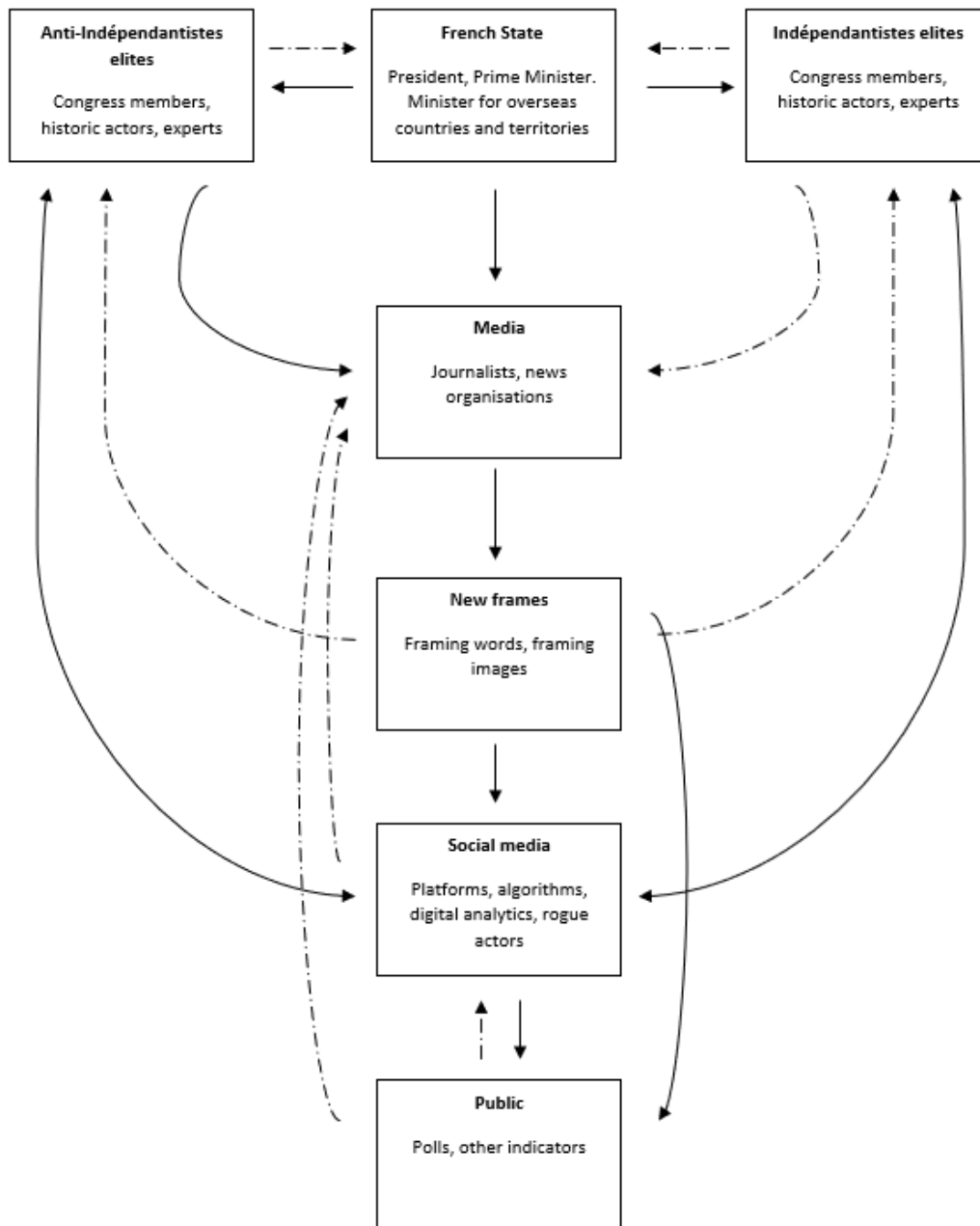


Source: Author's own

Chapter 6 also observed that *l'État*, as a producer of frames, appears to be less important in the New Caledonian context, in the eyes of the newsmakers. While this could be due to the media interviewees emphasising their own role, it is consistent with the argument that scope of discussion and location can limit state's capacity to influence framing.

Findings from the interviews also contributed to understanding the place of social media within the cascading activation framing model. In 6.7, interviewed newsmakers noted that traditional media use information from social media as a source only after it had gone through the usual filtering processes. As information from social media, the public, elites and *l'État* all go through similar filtering processes, this thesis argues that social media should be incorporated directly into the hierarchical model, rather than considering social media as merely a pump valve. Figure 7.3 illustrates this

Figure 7.3: Updated proposed model considering empirical findings about social media



Source: Author's own

Figure 7.3 shows that elites, the public and existing news frames all contribute to framing on social media. In turn, social media sends framing back to the public, elites and the media. Once received by the media, framing from social media goes through the media's filtering processes and may be incorporated in news frames. If incorporated into news frames, that framing is again sent to the public and elites.

In Figure 7.3 there is a dotted line going upwards from social media to the traditional media. The line is dotted because of de la Bourdonnaye's comment that social media is not a source of information

until it is verified and regrouped. Once filtered through traditional media, frames from social media may cascade downwards into news frames.

When incorporating social media into the model, this thesis proposes to include a direct arrow going down from social media to the public, as the public can receive frames directly from social media. This thesis also included a dotted arrow going up from the public to social media, as the public can add to the frames that are present on social media. This is only a dotted line as, due to the vast quantities of existing frames on social media, the public is limited in how they can influence the framing present on social media.

This thesis also proposes to include direct arrows from the local elites and news frames down to social media, as the local elites, and the media (through their news frames) can all influence the framing of social media. As the accounts of local elites and traditional media sources tend to have larger followings than individual users who make up the 'public', these are direct arrows rather than dotted arrows, to reflect their greater capacity to influence framing. Entman and Usher (2018) argue that social media platforms allow elites to more directly connect to the public through social media. This is reflected in this thesis' updated model as frames can cascade directly from the elites to social media, and then directly from social media to the public.

While this thesis disagrees with Entman and Usher's treatment of social media as merely a pump-valve, this thesis agrees with Entman and Usher that more research needs to be done to better understand the communication pathways between the actors of the cascade model and how social media can impact its power hierarchies. This research hopes to contribute to the scholarship by putting forward the case that social media is indeed a distinct part of the communication pathways. However, at the conclusion of this research, the extent to which social media may degrade the power of traditional media, or reinforce the power of the elites, is still unknown.

8. Conclusion

In summary, this thesis aimed to examine whether the cascading activation framing theory was applicable to the New Caledonian media context and how frames of France and Europe/EU contributed to discussion on New Caledonia's future. This thesis aimed to add to theoretical understandings of media framing and the cascading activation framing theory by contributing to the literature a case study which examines a) a non-US context b) media framing in the understudied referendum context, and c) specific subjects (France and Europe/EU) in the context of a broader political event.

This research was guided by two overarching research questions and six operational sub-research questions, which prompted analysis into the visibility, emotive charge and thematic framing of France and Europe/EU in the referendum context. These sub-research questions were answered with the analysis of 310 media articles. The findings of the content analysis of the media were complemented by findings from three semi-structured interviews conducted with New Caledonian journalists a month before the referendum was held. The findings from the interviews gave this research greater insight into journalistic processes. This insight was particularly useful in understanding how the hierarchical 'cascade' model can be applied to the New Caledonian context.

This thesis has added to theoretical understandings of media framing and the cascading activation framing model in five key ways.

Firstly, this thesis confirmed the relevance of many existing theoretical constructs. For example, official sponsors of frames and media organisation practices were observed to influence the prominence of frames, as hypothesised by Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p.6-8).

Secondly, this thesis further developed existing theoretical constructs. This thesis argued that framing indicators should be synthesised in order to determine which articles are the most salient. This research tested this by assessing the correlation between visibility and emotiveness. This was particularly important as it showed that the most salient articles tended to be published at the most crucial moments of the campaign. It also allowed for the research to identify which thematic frames were most often included in the most salient articles.

Thirdly, this thesis argued that there should be a theoretical distinction between direct framing contests and importance framing contests. This research was uniquely placed to observe the need for such a distinction as this research was examining France and Europe/EU in the context of a political event. As these subjects were emotively framed in a fairly consistent manner (*neutral-to-positive*), there were few observed direct framing contests i.e. opposing actors tended to see France as

somewhat good, even as opinions differed on whether New Caledonia should remain a part of France. Instead, the tension between frames was in terms of which framing was most important or relevant.

Fourthly, while examining several framing contests, this thesis observed that Macron's capacity to influence framing was limited by factors of location and scope of discussion. This is consistent with Entman's argument that an actor's level of power can determine whether they win a framing contest (2004, p.13). Macron's level of power to influence local media framing is dependent on whether he is present and able to contribute to discussions. Therefore, this thesis proposed placing both the State and local elites in the top tier of the model.

Finally, this thesis argued that social media should be included in the hierarchical model. To visually represent this, this thesis proposed an updated version of the 2003/2004 hierarchical cascade model which is applicable to the New Caledonian context and takes into account the importance of social media in the modern world.

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Appendix 1

Political parties and key figures in New Caledonia

Party	Key figures	Independentist or Anti-independentist	Group in Congress
Le Rassemblement	Thierry Santa (President of Congress until July 2018)	Anti-independentist	Les Républicains Rassemblement - MPC
Mouvement Populaire Calédonien (MPC)	Gil Brial	Anti-independentist	Les Républicains Rassemblement - MPC
Calédonie Ensemble (CE)	Philippe Dunoyer, Philippe Gomes, Philippe Michel	Anti-independentist	Calédonie Ensemble
Les Républicains Calédoniens (LRC)	Sonia Backès	Anti-independentist	Les Républicains Calédoniens
Union Calédonienne (UC)	Daniel Goa	Independentist	UC-FLNKS et Nationalistes
Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS)	Roch Wamytan, Victor Tutugoro	Independentist	UC-FLNKS et Nationalistes
Union National Pour L'Indépendance (UNI)	Louis Mapou	Independentist	Union National Pour L'Indépendance
Parti de Libération Kanak (Palika)	Paul Neaoutyine	Independentist	Union National Pour L'Indépendance
Formerly MPC until July 2018	Gaël Yanno (President of Congress as of July 2018)	Anti-independentist	Non-affiliated
Parti Travailleiste (PT)	Louis Kotra Uregei	Anti-independentist	Non-affiliated

Appendix 2

Interview questionnaire

1. Can you please comment on your contribution on the referendum?
2. The whole world is watching as New Caledonia prepares for this referendum on independence and there is a lot of global attention as well as local interest in news coverage on the referendum. Keeping this in mind, how does [insert media source name] view the referendum?
3. What is the intended audience of [insert media source name]'s articles on the referendum?

Probe if two audiences are mentioned: Which of these is of primary relevance?

4. Is there an officially formulated policy of [insert media source name] for covering the referendum?

Probe if YES: What is it?

Probe if NO: Is there a non-official policy? Or guidelines for covering the referendum?

Other probes: Where does this direction come from? Do the owners of the newspaper have a role in guiding the coverage on the referendum? Do you receive instructions from editors as to how to report on the referendum?

5. When reporting on the referendum what values lead your selection of the news?
Probe: Are these personal values?
Probe: Do you think other reporters hold different values?
6. How do you decide which political parties and leaders to interview and feature in your articles about the referendum?
Probe if a balance of opinions is not discussed: Do you strive to include a balance of opinions in your reporting of the referendum?
7. Is your coverage proactive or reactive?
8. From where do you get the news sources for your articles?
9. When writing news articles about the referendum, are you considering how they will be received by the public?

Probe: In what way?

10. In what way do you think the specific phrasing of the referendum question (Voulez-vous que la Nouvelle-Calédonie accède à la pleine souveraineté et devienne indépendante?) influences your reporting of the referendum?
11. In what way do you think it is relevant to include discussion of France and Europe when reporting on the referendum?
12. When I say referendum, what three images come to mind?

Probe: And why might that be?

French translation of interview questions:

1. Pouvez-vous commenter sur votre contribution (au reportage) sur le référendum ?
2. Le monde entier regarde pendant que la Nouvelle Calédonie se prépare à ce referendum sur l'indépendance, et le reportage médiatique sur le referendum suscite beaucoup d'attention globale. Compte tenu de cela, comment est-ce que [insert media source name] voit il le référendum ?
3. Et pour les articles de [insert media source name] qui se traite du référendum ou qui incluent une mention du référendum, qui est le public visé ?

Probe if two audiences are mentioned: Lequel de ces publics est de première importance?

4. Est-ce que [insert media source name] a-t-il une ligne directrice ou politique formulée officiellement pour couvrir le référendum ?

Probe if YES: Qu'est-ce que c'est ?

Probe if NO: Est-ce qu'il y a une politique qui n'est pas officielle ? Ou des lignes directrices pour le reportage sur le référendum ?

Other probes: Et d'où vient cette direction ? Les propriétaires du journal ont-ils un rôle à jouer pour guider le reportage sur le référendum ? Recevez-vous des instructions des rédacteurs en chef sur la manière de faire le reportage sur le référendum ?

5. Quand vous écrivez des articles sur le référendum, quels sont les valeurs qui influencent votre sélection des nouvelles?

Probe: Est-ce que ces valeurs sont personnels ?

Probe: Pensez-vous que des autres journalistes ont des valeurs différentes ?

6. Comment décidez-vous quels partis politiques et quels des leaders à interviewer et à inclure dans vos articles sur le référendum ?

Probe if a balance of opinions in not discussed: Est-ce que vous aspirez à inclure plusieurs opinions différentes dans votre reportage sur le referendum ?

7. Votre reportage, est-elle proactive ou réactive ?

8. D'où trouvez-vous les sources d'information pour vos articles ?

9. Lorsque vous écrivez des articles sur le referendum, envisagez-vous comment ils seront reçus par le public ?

Probe: De quelle manière?

10. De quelle manière pensez-vous que la formulation spécifique de la question référendaire (Voulez-vous que la Nouvelle-Calédonie accède à la pleine souveraineté et devienne indépendante?) influence votre reportage sur le referendum ?

11. Et en quoi pensez-vous qu'il soit pertinent d'inclure une discussion de la France et de l'Europe dans le reportage sur le référendum ?

12. Quand je dis « referendum » quelles sont les trois images qui viennent a l'esprit ?

Probe: Et pourquoi ?